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CHAPTER 28

Kashi, Reborn and Discovered

"Please do not go into the water. Let us bathe by dipping our buckets."

I was addressing the young Ranchi students who were accompanying me on an eight-mile hike to a neighbouring hill. The pond before us seemed inviting, but a distaste for it had arisen in my mind. Most of the boys began to dip their buckets, but a few lads yielded to the temptation of the cool waters. No sooner had they dived than large water snakes wiggled around them. What shrieks and splashes! What comical alacrity in leaving the pond!

We enjoyed a picnic lunch after we had reached our destination. I sat under a tree, surrounded by the boys. Finding me in an inspirational mood, they plied me with questions.

"Please tell me, sir," one youth inquired, "if I shall always stay with you in the path of renunciation."

"Ah, no," I replied, "you will be forcibly taken away to your home, and later you will marry."

Incredulous, he made a vehement protest. "Only if I am dead could I be carried home." (But in a few months his parents arrived to take him away, in spite of his tearful resistance. Some years later, he did marry.)

After answering many questions, I was addressed by a lad named Kashi. He was about twelve years old, a brilliant student, and beloved by all.

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"Sir," he said, "what will be my fate?"

"You shall soon be dead." An irresistible power, it seemed, forced the words from my lips.

The disclosure shocked and grieved me as well as everyone else. Silently rebuking myself as an *enfant terrible*, I refused to answer further questions.

On our return to the school, Kashi came to my room.

"If I die, will you find me when I am reborn, and bring me again to the spiritual path?" he asked amid sobs.

I felt constrained to refuse this difficult occult responsibility. But for weeks afterward, Kashi pressed me doggedly. Seeing him unnerved to the breaking point, I finally consoled him.

"Yes," I promised. "If the Heavenly Father lends His aid, I will try to find you."

During the summer vacation, I started on a short trip. Regretting that I could not take Kashi with me, before leaving I called him to my room and carefully instructed him to remain, against all persuasion, in the spiritual vibrations of the school. Somehow I felt that if he did not go home, he might avoid the impending calamity.

No sooner had I left than Kashi's father arrived in Ranchi. For fifteen days he tried to break the will of his son, explaining that if Kashi would go to Calcutta for only four days to see his mother, he could then return. Kashi persistently refused. The father finally said he would take the boy away with the help of the police. The threat disturbed Kashi, who was unwilling to be the cause of any unfavourable publicity to the school. He saw no choice but to go.

I returned to Ranchi a few days later. When I heard how Kashi had been removed, I entrained at once for Calcutta. There I engaged a horse cab. Surprisingly, as the vehicle passed beyond the Howrah bridge over the Ganges, the first persons I saw were Kashi's father and other relatives in mourning clothes. Shouting to my driver to stop, I jumped from the cab and glared at the unfortunate father.

"Mr. Murderer," I cried somewhat unreasonably, "you have killed my boy!"

The father had already realized the wrong he had done in forcibly bringing Kashi to Calcutta. During the few days the boy

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had been there, he had eaten contaminated food, contracted cholera, and passed on.

My love for Kashi, and the pledge to find him after death, night and day haunted me. No matter where I went, his face loomed up before me. I began a memorable search for him, even as long ago I had searched for my lost mother.

I felt that inasmuch as God had given me the faculty of reason, I must utilize it and tax my powers to the utmost in order to discover the subtle laws by which I could know the boy's astral whereabouts. He was a soul vibrating with unfulfilled desires, I realized — a mass of light floating somewhere amidst millions of luminous souls in the astral regions. How was I to tune in with him, among so many vibrating lights of other souls?

Using a secret yoga technique, I broadcasted my love to Kashi's soul through the "microphone" of the spiritual eye, the inner point between the eyebrows.* I intuitively felt that Kashi would soon return to the earth, and that if I kept unceasingly broadcasting my call to him, his soul would reply. I knew that the slightest impulse sent to me by Kashi would be felt in the nerves of my fingers, arms, and spine.

Using my upraised hands as antennae, I often turned myself round and round, trying to discover the direction of the place in which, I believed, he had already been reborn as an embryo. I hoped to receive response from him in the concentration-tuned "radio" of my heart.

With undiminishing zeal, I practised the yoga method steadily for about six months after Kashi's death. Walking with a few friends one morning in the crowded Bowbazar section of Calcutta, I lifted my hands in the usual manner. For the first time, there was response. I thrilled to detect electrical impulses trickling down my

* The will, projected from the point between the eyebrows, is the *broadcasting* apparatus of thought. Man's feeling or emotional power, calmly concentrated on the heart, enables it to act as a mental radio that *receives* the messages of other persons, far or near. In telepathy the fine vibrations of thoughts in one man's mind are transmitted through the subtle vibrations of astral ether and then through the grosser earthly ether, creating electrical waves that, in turn, transform themselves into thought waves in the mind of the other person.

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fingers and palms. These currents translated themselves into one overpowering thought from a deep recess of my consciousness: "I am Kashi, I am Kashi; come to me!"

The thought became almost audible as I concentrated on my heart radio. In the characteristic, slightly hoarse whisper of Kashi,* I heard his summons again and again. I seized the arm of one of my companions, Prokash Das, and smiled at him joyfully.

"It looks as though I have located Kashi!"

I began to turn round and round, to the undisguised amusement of my friends and the passing throng. The electrical impulses tingled through my fingers only when I faced toward a nearby path, aptly named "Serpentine Lane." The astral currents disappeared when I turned in other directions.

"Ah," I exclaimed, "Kashi's soul must be living in the womb of some mother whose home is in this lane."

My companions and I approached closer to Serpentine Lane; the vibrations in my upraised hands grew stronger, more pronounced. As if by a magnet, I was pulled toward the right side of the road. Reaching the entrance of a certain house, I was astounded to find myself transfixed. I knocked at the door in a state of intense excitement, holding my very breath. I felt that my long and unusual quest had come to a successful end.

The door was opened by a servant, who told me her master was at home. He descended the stairway from the second floor and smiled at me inquiringly. I hardly knew how to frame my question, at once pertinent and impertinent.

"Please tell me, sir, if you and your wife have been expecting a child for about six months?"†

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* Every soul in its pure state is omniscient. Kashi's soul remembered all the characteristics of Kashi, the boy, and therefore mimicked his hoarse voice in order to stir my recognition.

† Though many men, after physical death, remain in an astral world for 500 or 1000 years, there is no invariable rule about the length of time between incarnations. (See chapter 43.) A man's allotted span in a physical or an astral embodiment is karmically predetermined.

Death, and indeed sleep, "the little death," are a mortal necessity, freeing the unenlightened human being temporarily from sense trammels. As man's essential

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"Yes, it is so." Seeing that I was a swami, a renunciant attired in the traditional orange cloth, he added politely, "Pray inform me how you know my affairs."

When he heard about Kashi and the promise I had given, the astonished man believed my story.

"A male child of fair complexion will be born to you," I told him. "He will have a broad face, with a cowlick atop his forehead. His disposition will be notably spiritual." I felt certain that the coming child would bear these resemblances to Kashi.

Later I visited the child, whose parents had given him his old name of Kashi. Even in infancy he was strikingly similar in appearance to my dear Ranchi student. The child showed me an instantaneous affection; the attraction of the past awoke with redoubled intensity.

Years later the teenage boy wrote me, during my stay in America. He explained his deep longing to follow the path of a renunciant. I directed him to a Himalayan master, who accepted as a disciple the reborn Kashi.

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nature is Spirit, he receives in sleep and in death certain revivifying reminders of his incorporeity.

The equilibrating law of karma, as expounded in the Hindu scriptures, is that of action and reaction, cause and effect, sowing and reaping. In the course of natural righteousness (*rita*), each man, by his thoughts and actions, becomes the molder of his destiny. Whatever universal energies he himself, wisely or unwisely, has set in motion must return to him as their starting point, like a circle inexorably completing itself. "The world looks like a mathematical equation, which, turn it how you will, balances itself. Every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed, in silence and certainty." — *Emerson, "Compensation."* An understanding of karma as the law of justice underlying life's inequalities serves to free the human mind from resentment against God and man. (See p. 172 n.)

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CHAPTER 29

Rabindranath Tagore and I Compare Schools

"Rabindranath Tagore taught us to sing, as a natural form of self-expression, as effortlessly as birds."

Bhola Nath, a bright fourteen-year-old lad at my Ranchi school, gave me that explanation after I had complimented him one morning on his melodious outbursts. With or without provocation, the boy poured forth a tuneful stream. He had previously attended the famous Tagore school, Santiniketan (Haven of Peace), in Bolpur.

"The songs of Rabindranath have been on my lips since early youth," I told my companion. "All Bengalis, even the unlettered peasants, delight in his lofty verse."

Bhola and I sang together a few refrains from Tagore, who set to music thousands of Indian poems: some of his own composition and others of ancient origin.

"I met Rabindranath soon after he had received the Nobel Prize for literature," I remarked after our vocalizing. "I was drawn to visit him because I admired his undiplomatic courage in disposing of his literary critics." I chuckled.

Bhola, curious, inquired the story.

"The scholars severely flayed Tagore for introducing a new style into Bengali poetry," I began. "He mixed colloquial and classical expressions, ignoring all the prescribed limitations dear to the pundits'

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hearts. His songs embody deep philosophic truth in emotionally appealing terms, with little regard for the accepted literary forms.

"An influential critic spitefully referred to Rabindranath as a 'pigeon-poet who sold his cooings in print for a rupee.' But Tagore's revenge was at hand; the whole Western literary world paid homage at his feet soon after he himself had translated into English his *Gitanjali* ("Song Offerings"). A trainload of pundits, including his one-time critics, went to Santiniketan to offer their congratulations.

"Rabindranath received his guests only after an intentionally long delay, and then heard their praise in stoic silence. Finally he turned against them their own habitual weapons of criticism.

"'Gentlemen,' he said, 'the fragrant honours you here bestow are incongruously mingled with the putrid odours of your past contempt. Is there possibly any connection between my award of the Nobel Prize, and your suddenly acute powers of appreciation? I am still the same poet who displeased you when I first offered my humble flowers at the shrine of Bengal.'

"The newspapers published an account of the bold chastisement given by Tagore. I admired the outspoken words of a man unhypnotized by flattery," I went on. "I was introduced to Rabindranath in Calcutta by his secretary, Mr. C. F. Andrews,* who was simply attired in a Bengali *dhoti*. He referred lovingly to Tagore as 'Gurudeva.'

"Rabindranath received me graciously. He emanated an aura of charm, culture, and courtliness. Replying to my question about his literary background, he told me that he had been chiefly influenced by our religious epics and by the works of Vidyapati, a popular fourteenth-century poet."

Inspired by these memories, I began to sing Tagore's version of an old Bengali song, "Light the Lamp of Thy Love." Bhola and I chanted joyously as we strolled over the Vidyalaya grounds.

About two years after founding the Ranchi school, I received an invitation from Rabindranath to visit him at Santiniketan and discuss our educational ideals. I went gladly. The poet was seated

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* The English writer and publicist, close friend of Mahatma Gandhi.

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in his study when I entered; I thought then, as at our first meeting, that he was as striking a model of superb manhood as any painter could desire. His beautifully chiselled face, nobly patrician, was framed in long hair and flowing beard. Large, melting eyes; an angelic smile; and a voice of flutelike quality that was literally enchanting. Stalwart, tall, and grave, he combined an almost womanly tenderness with the delightful spontaneity of a child. No idealized conception of a poet could find more suitable embodiment than in this gentle singer.

Tagore and I were soon deep in a comparative study of our schools, both founded along unorthodox lines. We discovered many identical features — outdoor instruction, simplicity, ample scope for the child's creative spirit. Rabindranath, however, laid considerable stress on the study of literature and poetry, and on the self-expression through music and song that I had already noted in the case of Bhola. The Santiniketan children observed periods of silence but were given no special yoga training.

The poet listened with flattering attention to my description of the energizing Yogoda exercises and of the yoga concentration techniques taught to all students at Ranchi.

Tagore told me of his own early educational struggles. "I fled from school after the fifth grade," he said, laughing. I could readily understand how his innate poetic delicacy would be affronted by the dreary, disciplinary atmosphere of a schoolroom.

"That is why I opened Santiniketan under the shady trees and the glories of the sky." He motioned eloquently to a little group studying in the beautiful garden. "A child is in his natural setting amidst the flowers and the songbirds. There he may more easily express the hidden wealth of his individual endowment. True education is not pumped and crammed in from outward sources, but aids in bringing to the surface the infinite hoard of wisdom within."*

I agreed, and added, "In ordinary schools the idealistic and

* "The soul having been often born, or, as the Hindus say, 'travelling the path of existence through thousands of births'...there is nothing of which she has not gained the knowledge; no wonder that she is able to recollect...what formerly she knew....For inquiry and learning is reminiscence all." — *Emerson, "Representative Men."*

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hero-worshipping instincts of the young are starved on an exclusive diet of statistics and chronological eras."

The poet spoke lovingly of his father, Devendranath, who had inspired the Santiniketan beginnings.

"Father presented me with this fertile land, where he had already built a guest house and temple," Rabindranath told me. "I started my educational experiment here in 1901, with only ten boys. The eight thousand pounds that came with the Nobel Prize all went for the upkeep of the school."

The elder Tagore, Devendranath, known far and wide as "Maharishi," was a very remarkable man, as one may discover from his *Autobiography*. Two years of his manhood were spent in meditation in the Himalayas. In turn, his father, Dwarkanath Tagore, had been celebrated throughout Bengal for his munificent public benefactions. From this illustrious tree has sprung a family of geniuses. Not Rabindranath alone; all his relatives have distinguished themselves in creative expression. His nephews, Gogonendra and Abanindra, are among the foremost artists* of India. Rabindranath's brother, Dwijendra, was a deep-seeing philosopher, beloved even by birds and woodland creatures.

Rabindranath invited me to stay overnight in the guest house. In the evening I was charmed by a tableau of the poet and a group in the patio. Time unfolded backward: the scene before me was like one in an ancient hermitage — the joyous singer encircled by his devotees, all aureoled in divine love. Tagore knitted each tie of friendship with cords of harmony. Never assertive, he drew and captured the heart with an irresistible magnetism. Rare blossom of poesy blooming in the garden of the Lord, attracting others by a natural fragrance!

In his melodious voice, Rabindranath read to us a few of his exquisite poems, newly created. Most of his songs and plays, written for the delectation of his students, have been composed at Santiniketan. The beauty of his lines, to me, lies in his art of referring

* Rabindranath, too, in his sixties engaged in a serious study of painting. His work was exhibited some years ago in European capitals and in New York.

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to God in nearly every stanza, yet seldom mentioning the sacred Name. "Drunk with the bliss of singing," he wrote, "I forget myself and call Thee friend who art my Lord."

The following day, after lunch, I bade the poet a reluctant farewell. I rejoice that his little school has now grown to an international university, Visva-Bharati,* where scholars from many lands find an ideal environment.

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms toward perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever widening thought and action;
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake!"†

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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* Although the beloved poet died in 1941, his Visva-Bharati institution is still flourishing. In January 1950, sixty-five teachers and students from Santiniketan paid a ten-day visit to the Yogoda Satsanga school in Ranchi.

† *Gitanjali* (Macmillan Co.). A thoughtful study of the poet will be found in *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, by the celebrated scholar, Sir S. Radhakrishnan (Macmillan, 1918).

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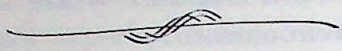
CHAPTER 30

The Law of Miracles



The great novelist Leo Tolstoy* wrote a delightful folk tale, *The Three Hermits*. His friend Nicholas Roerich summarized it, as follows:

"On an island there lived three old hermits. They were so simple that the only prayer they used was: 'We are three; Thou art Three — have mercy on us!' Great miracles were manifested during this naive prayer.

"The local bishop† came to hear about the three hermits and their inadmissible prayer, and decided to visit them in order to teach them the canonical invocations. He arrived on the island, told the hermits that their heavenly petition was undignified, and taught them many of the customary prayers. The bishop then left on a boat. He saw, following the ship, a radiant light. As it approached he discerned the three hermits, who were holding hands and running upon the waves in an effort to overtake the vessel.

"'We have forgotten the prayers you taught us,' they cried as they reached the bishop, 'and have hastened to ask you to repeat them.' The awed bishop shook his head.

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* Tolstoy had many ideals in common with Mahatma Gandhi; the two men corresponded on the subject of nonviolence. Tolstoy considered Christ's central teaching to be "resist not evil (with evil)" (*Matthew* 5:39, Bible); evil should be "resisted" only with its logically effective opposite: good or love.

† The story apparently has a historical basis; an editorial note informs us that the bishop met the three hermits while he was sailing from Archangel to the Slovetsky Monastery, at the mouth of the Dvina River.

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"'Dear ones,' he replied humbly, 'continue to live with your old prayer!' "

How did the three saints walk on the water?

How did Christ resurrect his crucified body?

How did Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar perform their miracles?

Modern science has, as yet, no answer; though with the advent of the Atomic Age the scope of the world-mind has been abruptly enlarged. The word "impossible" is becoming less prominent in man's vocabulary.

The Vedic scriptures declare that the physical world operates under one fundamental law of *maya*, the principle of relativity and duality. God, the Sole Life, is Absolute Unity; to appear as the separate and diverse manifestations of a creation He wears a false or unreal veil. That illusory dualistic veil is *maya*.* Many great scientific discoveries of modern times have confirmed this simple pronouncement of the ancient rishis.

Newton's Law of Motion is a law of *maya*: "To every action there is always an equal and contrary reaction; the mutual actions of any two bodies are always equal and oppositely directed." Action and reaction are thus exactly equal. "To have a single force is impossible. There must be, and always is, a pair of forces equal and opposite."

Fundamental natural activities all betray their mayic origin. Electricity, for example, is a phenomenon of repulsion and attraction; its electrons and protons are electrical opposites. Another example: the atom or final particle of matter is, like the earth itself, a magnet with positive and negative poles. The entire phenomenal world is under the inexorable sway of polarity; no law of physics, chemistry, or any other science is ever found free from inherent opposite or contrasted principles.

Physical science, then, cannot formulate laws outside of *maya*: the very fabric and structure of creation. Nature herself is *maya*; natural science must perforce deal with her ineluctable quiddity. In her own domain, she is eternal and inexhaustible; future scientists can do no more than probe one aspect after another of her varied infinitude.

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* See pp. 40 n., 42 n.

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Science thus remains in a perpetual flux, unable to reach finality; fit indeed to discover the laws of an already existing and functioning cosmos but powerless to detect the Law Framer and Sole Operator. The majestic manifestations of gravitation and electricity have become known, but what gravitation and electricity are, no mortal knoweth.*

To surmount *maya* was the task assigned to the human race by the millennial prophets. To rise above the duality of creation and perceive the unity of the Creator was conceived of as man's highest goal. Those who cling to the cosmic illusion must accept its essential law of polarity: flow and ebb, rise and fall, day and night, pleasure and pain, good and evil, birth and death. This cyclic pattern assumes a certain anguishing monotony after man has gone through a few thousand human births; he begins then to cast a hopeful eye beyond the compulsions of *maya*.

To remove the veil of *maya* is to uncover the secret of creation. He who thus denudes the universe is the only true monotheist. All others are worshipping heathen images. So long as man remains subject to the dualistic illusions of Nature, the Janus-faced *Maya* is his goddess; he cannot know the one true God.

The world illusion, *maya*, manifests in men as *aviðya*, literally, "not-knowledge," ignorance, delusion. *Maya* or *aviðya* can never be destroyed through intellectual conviction or analysis, but solely through attaining the interior state of *nirbikalpa ѕamaðhi*. The Old Testament prophets, and seers of all lands and ages, spoke from that state of consciousness.

Ezekiel said:† "Afterwards he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: and, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory." Through the divine eye in the forehead (east), the yogi sails his consciousness into omnipresence, hearing the Word or *Aum*, divine sound of "many waters": the vibrations of light that

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* Marconi, the great inventor, made the following admission of scientific inadequacy before the finalities: "The inability of science to solve life is absolute. This fact would be truly frightening were it not for faith. The mystery of life is certainly the most persistent problem ever placed before the thought of man."

† *Ezekiel* 43:1–2 (Bible).

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constitute the sole reality of creation.

Among the trillion mysteries of the cosmos, the most phenomenal is light. Unlike sound waves, whose transmission requires air or other material media, light waves pass freely through the vacuum of interstellar space. Even the hypothetical ether, held as the interplanetary medium of light in the undulatory theory, may be discarded on the Einsteinian grounds that the geometrical properties of space render unnecessary a theory of ether. Under either hypothesis, light remains the most subtle, the freest from material dependence, of any natural manifestation.

In the gigantic conceptions of Einstein, the velocity of light — 1,86,300 miles per second — dominates the whole Theory of Relativity. He proves mathematically that the velocity of light is, so far as man's finite mind is concerned, the only constant of a universe in flux. On the sole "absolute" of light velocity depend all human standards of time and space. Not abstractly eternal as hitherto considered, time and space are relative and finite factors. They derive their conditional measurement-validities only in reference to the yardstick of light velocity.

In joining space as a dimensional relativity, time is now stripped to its rightful nature: a simple essence of ambiguity. With a few equational strokes of his pen, Einstein banished from the universe every fixed reality except that of light.

In a later development, his Unified Field Theory, the great physicist sought to embody in one mathematical formula the laws of gravitation and of electromagnetism. Reducing the cosmical structure to variations on a single law, Einstein has reached across the ages to the rishis who proclaimed a sole fabric of creation: a protean *maya*.*

On the epochal Theory of Relativity have arisen the mathematical possibilities of exploring the ultimate atom. Great scientists are now boldly asserting not only that the atom is energy rather than

* Einstein was convinced that the link between the laws of electromagnetism and gravity could be expressed in a mathematical formula (the Unified Field Theory), on which he was working at the time this book was written. Though he did not live to complete his work on it, many physicists today share Einstein's conviction that such a link will be found. *(Publisher's Note)*

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matter, but that atomic energy is essentially mind-stuff.

"The frank realization that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant advances," Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington writes in *The Nature of the Physical World*.* "In the world of physics we watch a shadowgraph performance of the drama of familiar life. The shadow of my elbow rests on the shadow table as the shadow ink flows over the shadow paper. It is all symbolic, and as a symbol the physicist leaves it. Then comes the alchemist Mind who transmutes the symbols....To put the conclusion crudely, the stuff of the world is mind-stuff."

With the recent devising of an electron microscope came definite proof of the light-essence of atoms and of the inescapable duality of nature. *The New York Times* gave the following report of a 1937 demonstration of the electron microscope before a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science:

> The crystalline structure of tungsten, hitherto known only indirectly by means of X rays, stood outlined boldly on a fluorescent screen, showing nine atoms in their correct positions in the space lattice, a cube, with one atom in each corner and one in the centre. The atoms in the crystal lattice of the tungsten appeared on the fluorescent screen as points of light, arranged in geometric pattern. Against this crystal cube of light the bombarding molecules of air could be observed as dancing points of light, similar to points of sunlight shimmering on moving waters....
>
> The principle of the electron microscope was first discovered in 1927 by Drs. Clinton J. Davisson and Lester H. Germer of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, New York City, who found that the electron has a dual personality, partaking of the characteristics of both a particle and a wave.† The wave quality gave the electron the characteristic of light, and a search was begun to devise means for "focusing" electrons in a manner similar to the focusing of light by means of a lens.
>
> For his discovery of the Jekyll-Hyde quality of the electron, which... showed that the entire realm of physical nature has a dual personality, Dr. Davisson received the Nobel Prize in physics.

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* Macmillan Company. † That is, both matter and energy.

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"The stream of knowledge," Sir James Jeans writes in *The Mysterious Universe*,* "is heading toward a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine."

Twentieth-century science is thus sounding like a page from the hoary Vedas.

From science, then, if it must be so, let man learn the philosophic truth that there is no material universe; its warp and woof is *maya*, illusion. Under analysis all its mirages of reality dissolve. As, one by one, the reassuring props of a physical cosmos crash beneath him, man dimly perceives his idolatrous reliance, his transgression of the Divine Command: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."†

In his famous equation outlining the equivalence of mass and energy, Einstein proved that the energy in any particle of matter is equal to its mass or weight multiplied by the square of the velocity of light. The release of the atomic energies is brought about through annihilation of the material particles. The "death" of matter has given birth to an Atomic Age.

Light velocity is a mathematical standard or constant not because there is an absolute value in 1,86,300 miles a second, but because no material body, whose mass increases with its velocity, can ever attain the velocity of light. Stated another way: only a material body whose mass is infinite could equal the velocity of light.

This conception brings us to the law of miracles.

Masters who are able to materialize and dematerialize their bodies and other objects, and to move with the velocity of light, and to utilize the creative light rays in bringing into instant visibility any physical manifestation, have fulfilled the lawful condition: their mass is infinite.

The consciousness of a perfected yogi is effortlessly identified not with a narrow body but with the universal structure. Gravitation, whether the "force" of Newton or the Einsteinian "manifestation of inertia," is powerless to *compel* a master to exhibit the property of weight: the distinguishing gravitational condition of all

* Cambridge University Press.

† *Exodus* 20:3 (Bible).

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material objects. He who knows himself as the omnipresent Spirit is subject no longer to the rigidities of a body in time and space. The imprisoning "rings-pass-not" have yielded to the solvent: *I am He.*

"Let there be light! And there was light."* In the creation of the universe, God's first command brought into being the structural essential: light. On the beams of this immaterial medium occur all divine manifestations. Devotees of every age testify to the appearance of God as flame and light. "His eyes were as a flame of fire," St. John tells us, "...and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."†

A yogi who through perfect meditation has merged his consciousness with the Creator perceives the cosmical essence as light (vibrations of life energy); to him there is no difference between the light rays composing water and the light rays composing land. Free from matter-consciousness, free from the three dimensions of space and the fourth dimension of time, a master transfers his body of light with equal ease over or through the light rays of earth, water, fire, and air.

"If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be *full of light.*"‡ Long concentration on the liberating spiritual eye has enabled the yogi to destroy all delusions concerning matter and its gravitational weight; he sees the universe as the Lord created it: an essentially undifferentiated mass of light.

"Optical images," Dr. L. T. Troland of Harvard tells us, "are built up on the same principle as the ordinary 'halftone' engravings; that is, they are made up of minute dottings or stipplings far too small to be detected by the eye. . . .The sensitiveness of the retina is so great that a visual sensation can be produced by relatively few quanta of the right kind of light."

The law of miracles is operable by any man who has realized that the essence of creation is light. A master is able to employ his divine knowledge of light phenomena to project instantly into perceptible manifestation the ubiquitous light atoms. The actual form of the projection (whatever it be: a tree, a medicine, a human body) is determined by

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* *Genesis* 1:3 (Bible).

† *Revelation* 1:14–16 (Bible).

‡ *Matthew* 6:22 (Bible).

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the yogi's wish and by his power of will and of visualization.

At night man enters the state of dream-consciousness and escapes from the false egoistic limitations that daily hem him round. In sleep he has an ever recurrent demonstration of the omnipotence of his mind. Lo! in the dream appear his long-dead friends, the remotest continents, the resurrected scenes of his childhood.

That free and unconditioned consciousness, which all men briefly experience in certain of their dreams, is the permanent state of mind of a God-tuned master. Innocent of all personal motives, and employing the creative will bestowed on him by the Creator, a yogi rearranges the light atoms of the universe to satisfy any sincere prayer of a devotee.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."*

For this purpose were man and creation made: that he should rise up as master of *maya*, knowing his dominion over the cosmos.

In 1915, shortly after I had entered the Swami Order, I witnessed a strange vision. Through it I came to understand the relativity of human consciousness, and clearly perceived the unity of the Eternal Light behind the painful dualities of *maya*. The vision descended on me as I sat one morning in my little attic room in Father's Garpar Road home. For months the First World War had been raging in Europe; I had been reflecting sadly on the vast toll of death.

As I closed my eyes in meditation, my consciousness was suddenly transferred to the body of a captain in command of a battleship. The thunder of guns split the air as shots were exchanged between shore batteries and the ship's cannons. A huge shell hit the powder magazine and tore my ship asunder. I jumped into the water, together with the few sailors who had survived the explosion.

Heart pounding, I reached the shore safely. But alas! a stray bullet ended its swift flight in my chest. I fell groaning to the ground. My whole body was paralyzed, yet I was aware of possessing it as one is conscious of a leg gone to sleep.

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* *Genesis* 1:26 (Bible).

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"At last the mysterious footstep of Death has caught up with me," I thought. With a final sigh, I was about to sink into unconsciousness when lo! I found myself seated in the lotus posture in my Garpar Road room.

Hysterical tears poured forth as I joyfully stroked and pinched my regained possession: a body free from a bullet hole in the breast. I rocked to and fro, inhaling and exhaling to assure myself that I was alive. Amidst these self-gratulations, again I found my consciousness transferred to the captain's dead body by the gory shore. Utter confusion of mind came upon me.

"Lord," I prayed, "am I dead or alive?"

A dazzling play of light filled the whole horizon. A soft rumbling vibration formed itself into words:

"What has life or death to do with light? In the image of My light I have made you. The relativities of life and death belong to the cosmic dream. Behold your dreamless being! Awake, My child, awake!"

As steps in man's awakening, the Lord inspires scientists to discover, at the right time and place, the secrets of His creation. Many modern discoveries help man to apprehend the cosmos as a varied expression of one power — light, guided by divine intelligence. The wonders of the motion picture, of radio, of television, of radar, of the photoelectric cell — the amazing "electric eye," of atomic energies, are all based on the electromagnetic phenomenon of light.

The motion-picture art can portray any miracle. From the impressive visual standpoint, no marvel is barred to trick photography. A man may be seen as a transparent astral body that is rising from his gross physical form, he can walk on the water, resurrect the dead, reverse the natural sequence of developments, and play havoc with time and space. The expert may assemble the photographic images as he pleases, achieving optical wonders similar to those that a true master produces with actual light rays.

Motion pictures, with their lifelike images, illustrate many truths concerning creation. The Cosmic Director has written His own plays and has summoned the tremendous casts for the pageant of the centuries. From the dark booth of eternity He sends His beams of light through the films of successive ages, and pictures are thrown on the backdrop of space.

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Just as cinematic images appear to be real but are only combinations of light and shade, so is the universal variety a delusive seeming. The planetary spheres, with their countless forms of life, are naught but figures in a cosmic motion picture. Temporarily true to man's five sense perceptions, the transitory scenes are cast on the screen of human consciousness by the infinite creative beam.

A cinema audience may look up and see that all screen images are appearing through the instrumentality of one imageless beam of light. The colourful universal drama is similarly issuing from the single white light of a Cosmic Source. With inconceivable ingenuity God is staging "super-colossal" entertainment for His children, making them actors as well as audience in His planetary theater.

One day I entered a cinema house to view a newsreel of the European battlefields. The First World War was still being waged in the West; the newsreel presented the carnage with such realism that I left the theatre with a troubled heart.

"Lord," I prayed, "why dost Thou permit such suffering?"

To my intense surprise, an instant answer came in the form of a vision of the actual European battlefields. The scenes, filled with the dead and dying, far surpassed in ferocity any representation of the newsreel.

"Look intently!" A gentle Voice spoke to my inner consciousness. "You will see that these scenes now being enacted in France are nothing but a play of chiaroscuro. They are the cosmic motion picture, as real and as unreal as the theatre newsreel you have just seen — a play within a play."

My heart was still not comforted. The Divine Voice went on: "Creation is light and shadow both, else no picture is possible. The good and evil of *maya* must ever alternate in supremacy. If joy were ceaseless here in this world, would man ever desire another? Without suffering, he scarcely cares to recall that he has forsaken his eternal home. Pain is a prod to remembrance. The way of escape is through wisdom. The tragedy of death is unreal; those who shudder at it are like an ignorant actor who dies of fright on the stage when nothing more has been fired at him than a blank cartridge. My sons are children of light; they will not sleep forever in delusion."

Although I had read scriptural accounts of *maya*, they had not

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given me the deep insight that came with personal visions and with the accompanying words of consolation. One's values are profoundly changed when he is finally convinced that creation is only a vast motion picture; and that not in it, but beyond it, lies his own reality.

After I had finished writing this chapter, I sat on my bed in the lotus posture. My room* was dimly lit by two shaded lamps. Lifting my gaze, I noticed that the ceiling was dotted with small mustard-coloured lights, scintillating and quivering with a radiumlike lustre. Myriads of pencilled rays, like sheets of rain, gathered into a transparent shaft and poured silently upon me.

At once my physical body lost its grossness and became metamorphosed into astral texture. I felt a floating sensation as, barely touching the bed, the weightless body shifted slightly and alternately to left and right. I looked around the room; the furniture and walls were as usual, but the little mass of light had so multiplied that the ceiling was invisible. I was wonder-struck.

"This is the cosmic motion-picture mechanism." A Voice spoke as though from within the light. "Shedding its beam on the white screen of your bed sheets, it is producing the picture of your body. Behold, your form is nothing but light!"

I gazed at my arms and moved them back and forth, yet could not feel their weight. Ecstatic joy overwhelmed me. The cosmic stem of light, blossoming as my body, seemed a divine reproduction of the light beams that stream out of the projection booth in a cinema house and make manifest the pictures on the screen.

For a long time I experienced this motion picture of my body in the faintly lit theatre of my own bedroom. Though I have had many visions, none was ever more singular. As the illusion of a solid body was completely dissipated, and as my realization deepened that the essence of all objects is light, I looked up to the throbbing stream of lifetrons and spoke entreatingly.

"Divine Light, please withdraw this, my humble bodily picture, into Thyself; even as Elijah was drawn up to heaven in a chariot of flame."†

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* In Self-Realization Fellowship hermitage, Encinitas, California. *(Publisher's Note)*

† *II Kings* 2:11 (Bible).

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This prayer was evidently startling; the beam disappeared. My body resumed its normal weight and sank on the bed; the swarm of dazzling ceiling lights flickered and vanished. My time to leave this earth had apparently not arrived.

"Besides," I thought philosophically, "Elijah might well be displeased at my presumption!"

A "miracle" is commonly considered to be an effect or event without law, or beyond law. But all events in our precisely adjusted universe are lawfully wrought and lawfully explicable. The so-called miraculous powers of a great master are a natural accompaniment to his exact understanding of subtle laws that operate in the inner cosmos of consciousness.

Nothing may truly be said to be a "miracle" except in the profound sense that everything is a miracle. That each of us is encased in an intricately organized body, and is set upon an earth whirling through space among the stars — is anything more commonplace? or more miraculous?

Great prophets like Christ and Lahiri Mahasaya usually perform many miracles. Such masters have a large and difficult spiritual mission to execute for mankind; miraculously helping those in distress appears to be a part of that mission. (See p. 218n.) Divine fiats are required against incurable diseases and insoluble human problems. When Christ was asked by the nobleman to heal his dying son at Capernaum, Jesus replied with wry humour: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." But he added: "Go thy way; thy son liveth" — (*John* 4:46–54, Bible).

In this chapter I have given the Vedic explanation of *maya*, the magical power of illusion that underlies the phenomenal worlds. Western science has already discovered that a "magic" of unreality pervades atomic "matter." However, it is not only Nature, but man also (in his mortal aspect) who is subject to *maya:* the principle of relativity, contrast, duality, inversion, oppositional states.

It should not be imagined that the truth about *maya* was understood only by the rishis. The Old Testament prophets called *maya* by the name of Satan (lit., in Hebrew, "the adversary"). The Greek Testament, as an equivalent for Satan, uses *diabolos* or devil. Satan or *Maya* is the Cosmic Magician who produces multiplicity of forms to hide the One Formless Verity. In God's plan and play (*lila*), the sole function of Satan or *Maya* is to attempt to divert man from Spirit to matter, from Reality to unreality.

Christ describes *maya* picturesquely as a devil, a murderer, and a liar. "The devil...was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" — (*John* 8:44, Bible).

"The devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" — (*I John* 3:8, Bible). That is, the manifestation of Christ Consciousness, within man's own being, effortlessly destroys the illusions or "works of the devil."

Maya is "from the beginning" because of its structural inherence in the phenomenal worlds. These are ever in transitional flux as antithesis to the Divine Immutability.

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CHAPTER 31

An Interview With the Sacred Mother

"Revered Mother, I was baptized in infancy by your prophet-husband. He was the guru of my parents and of my own guru Sri Yukteswarji. Will you therefore give me the privilege of hearing a few incidents in your sacred life?"

I was addressing Srimati Kashi Moni, the life companion of Lahiri Mahasaya. Finding myself in Banaras for a short period, I was fulfilling a long-felt desire to visit the venerable lady.

She received me graciously in the home of the Lahiri family in the Garudeswar Mohulla section of Banaras. Although aged, she was blooming like a lotus, emanating a spiritual fragrance. She was of medium build, with fair skin, a slender neck, and large lustrous eyes.

"Son, you are welcome here. Come upstairs."

Kashi Moni led the way to a very small room where, for a time, she had lived with her husband. I felt honoured to witness the shrine in which the peerless master had condescended to play the human drama of matrimony. The gentle lady motioned me to a pillow seat by her side.

"It was years before I came to realize the divine stature of my husband," she began. "One night, in this very room, I had a vivid dream. Glorious angels floated in unimaginable grace above me. So

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realistic was the sight that I awoke at once; strangely, the room was enveloped in dazzling light.

"My husband, in lotus posture, was levitated in the centre of the room, surrounded by angels. In supplicating dignity they were worshipping him with palm-folded hands.

"Astonished beyond measure, I was convinced that I was still dreaming.

"'Woman,' Lahiri Mahasaya said, 'you are not dreaming. Forsake your sleep forever and forever.' As he slowly descended to the floor, I prostrated myself at his feet.

"'Master,' I cried, 'again and again I bow before you! Will you forgive me for having considered you as my husband? I die with shame to realize that I have remained asleep in ignorance by the side of one who is divinely awakened. From this night, you are no longer my husband, but my guru. Will you accept my insignificant self as your disciple?'*

"The master touched me gently. 'Sacred soul, arise. You are accepted.' He motioned toward the angels. 'Please bow in turn to each of these holy saints.'

"After I had finished my humble genuflections, the angelic voices sounded together, like a chorus in an ancient scripture.

"'Consort of the Divine One, thou art blessed. We salute thee.' They bowed at my feet and lo! their refulgent forms vanished. The room darkened.

"My guru asked me to receive initiation into *Kriya Yoga*.

"'Of course,' I replied. 'I am sorry not to have had that blessing earlier in my life.'

"'The time was not ripe.' Lahiri Mahasaya smiled consolingly. 'Much of your karma I have silently helped you to work out. Now you are willing and ready.'

"He touched my forehead. Masses of whirling light appeared; the radiance gradually formed itself into an opal-blue spiritual eye, ringed in gold and centred with a white pentagonal star.

"'Penetrate your consciousness through the star into the kingdom

* "He for God only, she for God in him." —*Milton*.

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of the Infinite.' My guru's voice had a new note, soft like distant music.

"Vision after vision broke as oceanic surf on the shores of my soul. The panoramic spheres finally melted in a sea of bliss. I lost myself in ever surging blessedness. When I returned hours later to awareness of this world, the master gave me the technique of *Kriya Yoga*.

"From that night on, Lahiri Mahasaya never slept in my room again. Nor, thereafter, did he ever sleep. He remained in the front room downstairs, in the company of his disciples both by day and by night."

The illustrious lady fell into silence. Realizing the uniqueness of her relationship with the sublime yogi, I finally ventured to ask for further reminiscences.

"Son, you are greedy. Nevertheless you shall have one more story." She smiled shyly. "I will confess a sin that I committed against my guru-husband. Some months after my initiation, I began to feel forlorn and neglected. One morning Lahiri Mahasaya entered this little room to fetch an article; I quickly followed him. Overcome by delusion, I addressed him scathingly.

"'You spend all your time with the disciples. What about your responsibilities for your wife and children? I regret that you do not interest yourself in providing more money for the family.'

"The master glanced at me for a moment, then lo! he was gone. Awed and frightened, I heard a voice resounding from every part of the room:

"'It is all nothing, don't you see? How could a nothing like me produce riches for you?'

"'Guruji,' I cried, 'I implore pardon a million times! My sinful eyes can see you no more; please appear in your sacred form.'

"'I am here.' This reply came from above me. I looked up and saw the master materialize in the air, his head touching the ceiling. His eyes were like blinding flames. Beside myself with fear, I lay sobbing at his feet after he had quietly descended to the floor.

"'Woman,' he said, 'seek divine wealth, not the paltry tinsel of earth. After acquiring inward treasure, you will find that outward supply is always forthcoming.' He added, 'One of my spiritual sons

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will make provision for you.'

"My guru's words naturally came true; a disciple did leave a considerable sum for our family."

I thanked Kashi Moni for sharing with me her wondrous experiences.* On the following day I returned to her home and enjoyed several hours of philosophical discussion with Tincouri and Ducouri Lahiri. These two saintly sons of India's great yogi followed closely in his ideal footsteps. Both men were fair, tall, stalwart, and heavily bearded, with soft voices and an old-fashioned charm of manner.

His wife was not the only woman disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya; there were hundreds of others, including my mother. A woman *chela* once asked the guru for his photograph. He handed her a print, remarking, "If you deem it a protection, then it is so; otherwise it is only a picture."

A few days later this woman and Lahiri Mahasaya's daughter-in-law happened to be studying the Bhagavad Gita at a table behind which hung the guru's photograph. An electrical storm broke out with great fury.

"Lahiri Mahasaya, protect us!" The women bowed before the picture. Lightning struck the book on the table, but the two devotees were unhurt.

"I felt as though a sheet of ice were placed around me, to ward off the scorching heat," the *chela* related.

Lahiri Mahasaya performed two miracles in connection with a woman disciple, Abhoya. She and her husband, a Calcutta lawyer, started one day for Banaras to visit the guru. Their carriage was delayed by heavy traffic; they reached the Howrah main station in Calcutta only to hear the Banaras train whistling for departure.

Abhoya, near the ticket office, stood quietly.

"Lahiri Mahasaya, I beseech thee to stop the train!" she silently prayed. "I cannot suffer the pangs of delay in waiting another day to see thee."

The wheels of the snorting train continued to move round and round, but there was no onward progress. The engineer and

* The venerable mother passed on in Banaras on March 25, 1930.

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passengers descended to the platform to view the phenomenon. An English railroad guard approached Abhoya and her husband. Contrary to all precedent, the guard volunteered his services. "Babu," he said, "give me the money. I will buy your tickets while you get aboard."

As soon as the couple was seated and had received the tickets, the train slowly moved forward. In panic, the engineer and passengers clambered again to their places, knowing neither how the train started nor why it had stopped in the first place.

Arriving at the home of Lahiri Mahasaya in Banaras, Abhoya silently prostrated herself before the master, and tried to touch his feet.

"Compose yourself, Abhoya," he remarked. "How you love to bother me! As if you could not have come here by the next train!"

Abhoya visited Lahiri Mahasaya on another memorable occasion. This time she wanted his intercession, not with a train, but with the stork.

"I pray you to bless me that my ninth child live," she said. "Eight babies have been born to me; all died soon after birth."

The master smiled sympathetically. "Your coming child will live. Please follow my instructions carefully. The baby, a girl, will be born at night. See that the oil lamp is kept burning until dawn. Do not fall asleep and thus allow the light to become extinguished."

Abhoya's child was a daughter, born at night, exactly as foreseen by the omniscient guru. The mother instructed her nurse to keep the lamp filled with oil. Both women kept the urgent vigil far into the early morning hours, but finally fell asleep. The lamp oil was almost gone; the light flickered feebly. The bedroom door unlatched and flew open with a violent sound. The startled women awoke. Their astonished eyes beheld the form of Lahiri Mahasaya.

"Abhoya, behold, the light is almost gone!" He pointed to the lamp, which the nurse hastened to refill. As soon as it burned again brightly, the master vanished. The door closed; the latch was affixed without visible agency.

Abhoya's ninth child survived; in 1935, when I made inquiry, she was still living.

One of Lahiri Mahasaya's disciples, the venerable Kali Kumar

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Roy, related to me many fascinating details of his life with the master.

"I was often a guest at his Banaras home for weeks at a time," Roy told me. "I observed that many saintly figures, *dandi* swamis,* arrived in the quiet of night to sit at the guru's feet. Sometimes they would engage in discussion of meditational and philosophical points. At dawn the exalted guests would depart. I found during my visits that Lahiri Mahasaya did not once lie down to sleep.

"During an early period of my association with the master, I had to contend with the opposition of my employer," Roy went on. "He was steeped in materialism.

"'I don't want religious fanatics on my staff,' he would sneer. 'If I ever meet your charlatan guru, I shall give him some words to remember.'

"This threat failed to interrupt my regular programme; I spent nearly every evening in my guru's presence. One night my employer followed me and rushed rudely into the parlour. He doubtless intended to utter the remarks he had promised. No sooner had the man seated himself than Lahiri Mahasaya addressed the group of about twelve disciples.

"'Would you all like to see a picture?'

"When we nodded, he asked us to darken the room. 'Sit behind one another in a circle,' he said, 'and place your hands over the eyes of the man in front of you.'

"I was not surprised to observe that my employer also was following, albeit unwillingly, the master's directions. In a few minutes Lahiri Mahasaya asked us what we were seeing.

"'Sir,' I replied, 'a beautiful woman appears. She wears a red-bordered *sari*, and stands near an elephant-ear plant.' All the other disciples gave the same description. The master turned to my employer. 'Do you recognize that woman?'

"'Yes.' The man was evidently struggling with emotions new to his nature. 'I have been foolishly spending my money on her, though

* Members of a certain order of monks who ritually carry a *danda* (bamboo staff) as a symbol of the *Brahma-danda* ("Staff of Brahma"), which, in man, is the spinal column. The awakening of the seven cerebrospinal centres constitutes the true path to the Infinite.

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I have a good wife. I am ashamed of the motives that brought me here. Will you forgive me, and receive me as a disciple?'

"'If you lead a good moral life for six months, I shall accept you.' The master added, 'Otherwise I won't have to initiate you.'

"For three months my employer refrained from temptation; then he resumed his former relationship with the woman. Two months later he died. Thus I came to understand my guru's veiled prophecy about the improbability of the man's initiation."

Lahiri Mahasaya had a famous friend, Trailanga Swami, who was reputed to be over three hundred years old. The two yogis often sat together in meditation. Trailanga's renown is so widespread that few Hindus would deny the possibility of truth in any story of his astounding miracles. If Christ returned to earth and walked the streets of New York, displaying his divine powers, it would cause the same awe among the people that Trailanga created decades ago as he passed through the crowded lanes of Banaras. He was one of the *siddhas* (perfected beings) who have cemented India against the erosions of time.

On many occasions the swami was seen to drink, with no ill effect, the most deadly poisons. Thousands of people, including a few who are still living, have seen Trailanga floating on the Ganges. For days together he would sit on top of the water or remain hidden for very long periods under the waves. A common sight at Manikarnika Ghat was the swami's motionless body on the blistering stone slabs, wholly exposed to the merciless Indian sun.

By these feats Trailanga sought to teach men that human life need not depend on oxygen or on certain conditions and precautions. Whether the great master was above water or under it, and whether or not his body challenged the fierce solar rays, he proved that he lived by divine consciousness: Death could not touch him.

The yogi was great not only spiritually, but physically. His weight exceeded three hundred pounds: a pound for each year of his life! As he ate very seldom, the mystery is increased. A master, however, easily ignores all usual rules of health when he desires to do so for some special reason, often a subtle one known only to himself.

Great saints who have awakened from the cosmic mayic dream and have realized this world as an idea in the Divine Mind, can do

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as they wish with the body, knowing it to be only a manipulatable form of condensed or frozen energy. Though physical scientists now understand that matter is nothing but congealed energy, illumined masters have passed victoriously from theory to practise in the field of matter control.

Trailanga always remained completely nude. The harassed police of Banaras came to regard him as a baffling problem child. The natural swami, like the early Adam in the Garden of Eden, was unconscious of his nakedness. The police were quite conscious of it, however, and unceremoniously committed him to jail. General embarrassment ensued: the enormous body of Trailanga was soon seen, in its usual entirety, on the prison roof. His cell, still securely locked, offered no clue to his mode of escape.

The discouraged officers of the law once more performed their duty. This time a guard was posted before the swami's cell. Might again retired before Right: the great master was soon observed in his nonchalant stroll over the roof.

The Goddess of Justice wears a blindfold; in the case of Trailanga the outwitted police decided to follow her example.

The great yogi preserved a habitual silence.* In spite of his round face and huge, barrel-like stomach, Trailanga ate only occasionally. After weeks without food, he would break his fast with potfuls of clabbered milk offered to him by devotees. A sceptic once determined to expose Trailanga as a charlatan. A large bucket of calcium-lime mixture, used in whitewashing walls, was placed before the swami.

"Master," the materialist said, in mock reverence, "I have brought you some clabbered milk. Please drink it."

Trailanga unhesitatingly drank, to the last drop, the quarts of burning lime. In a few minutes the evildoer fell to the ground in agony.

"Help, Swami, help!" he cried. "I am on fire! Forgive my wicked test!"

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* He was a *muni*, or monk, who observed *mauna*, spiritual silence. Sanskrit *muni* is akin to Greek *monos*, "alone, single," from which are derived English words such as *monk* and *monism*.

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The great yogi broke his habitual silence. "Scoffer," he said, "you did not realize when you offered me poison that my life is one with your own. Except for my knowledge that God is present in my stomach, as in every atom of creation, the lime would have killed me. Now that you know the divine meaning of boomerang, never again play tricks on anyone."

The sinner, healed by Trailanga's words, slunk feebly away.

The reversal of pain was not a result of the master's will but of the operation of the law of justice* that upholds creation's farthest swinging orb. The functioning of the divine law is instantaneous for men of God-realization like Trailanga; they have banished forever all thwarting crosscurrents of ego.

Faith in the automatic adjustments of righteousness (often paid in an unexpected coin, as in the case of Trailanga and the would-be murderer) assuages our hasty indignance at human injustice. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."† What need for man's poor resources? the universe duly conspires for retribution.

Dull minds discredit the possibility of divine justice, love, omniscience, immortality. "Airy scriptural conjectures!" Men with this insensitive viewpoint, aweless before the cosmic spectacle, set into motion in their lives a discordant train of events that ultimately compels them to seek wisdom.

The omnipotence of spiritual law was referred to by Jesus on the occasion of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. As the disciples and the multitude shouted for joy, and cried, "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest," certain Pharisees complained of the undignified spectacle. "Master," they protested, "rebuke thy disciples."

But Jesus replied that if his disciples were silenced, "the stones would immediately cry out."‡

In this reprimand to the Pharisees, Christ was pointing out that divine justice is no figurative abstraction, and that a man of peace,

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* *Cf. II Kings* 2:19–24 (Bible). After Elisha had performed the miracle of "healing the waters" in Jericho, a group of children ridiculed him. "And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them."

† *Romans* 12:19 (Bible).

‡ *Luke* 19:37–40 (Bible).

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though his tongue be torn from its roots, will yet find his speech and his defence in the bedrock of creation, the universal order itself.

"Think you," Jesus was saying, "to silence men of peace? As well may you hope to throttle the voice of God, whose very stones sing His glory and His omnipresence. Will you demand that men not celebrate together in honour of the peace in heaven? Will you counsel them to gather in multitudes and express their oneness only on occasions of war on earth? Then make your preparations, O Pharisees, to overtopple the foundations of the world; for gentle men as well as stones or earth, and water and fire and air shall rise up against you, to bear witness to the divine harmony in creation."

The grace of the Christlike yogi, Trailanga, was once bestowed on my *sejo mama* (maternal uncle). One morning Uncle saw the master amid a crowd of devotees at a Banaras *ghat*. He managed to edge his way close to Trailanga and humbly to touch the yogi's feet. Uncle was astonished to find himself instantly freed from a painful chronic disease.*

The only known living disciple of the great yogi is a woman, Shankari Mai Jiew.† Daughter of one of Trailanga's disciples, she received the swami's training from her early childhood. She lived for forty years in a series of lonely Himalayan caves near Badrinath, Kedarnath, Amarnath, and Pasupatinath. The *brahmacharini* (woman ascetic), born in 1826, is now well over the century mark. Not aged in appearance, however, she has retained her black hair, sparkling teeth, and amazing energy. She comes out of her seclusion every few years to attend the periodical *melas* or religious fairs.

This woman saint often visited Lahiri Mahasaya. She has related that one day, in the Barrackpore section near Calcutta, while she was sitting by Lahiri Mahasaya's side, his great guru Babaji quietly entered the room and held converse with them both. "The deathless master was wearing a wet cloth," she recalls, "as

* The lives of Trailanga and other great masters remind us of Jesus' words: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name [the Christ Consciousness] they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." — *Mark* 16:17–18 (Bible).

† Bengali version of suffix *ji*, denoting respect.

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though he had just come from a dip in the river. He blessed me with some spiritual counsel."

Trailanga, on a certain occasion in Banaras, forsook his usual silence in order to pay public honour to Lahiri Mahasaya. One of Trailanga's disciples objected.

"Sir," he said, "why do you, a swami and a renunciant, show such respect to a householder?"

"My son," Trailanga replied, "Lahiri Mahasaya is like a divine kitten, remaining wherever the Cosmic Mother has placed him. While dutifully playing the part of a worldly man, he has received that perfect Self-realization which I have sought by renouncing everything — even my loincloth!"

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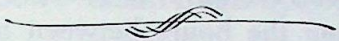
CHAPTER 32

Rama Is Raised From the Dead



"'Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus....When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.'"*

Sri Yukteswar was expounding the Christian scriptures one sunny morning on the balcony of his Serampore hermitage. Besides a few of Master's other disciples, I was present with a small group of my Ranchi students.

"In this passage Jesus calls himself the Son of God. Though he was truly united with God, his reference here has a deep impersonal significance," my guru explained. "The Son of God is the Christ or Divine Consciousness in man. No *mortal* can glorify God. The only honour that man can pay his Creator is to seek Him; man cannot glorify an Abstraction that he does not know. The 'glory' or nimbus around the head of the saints is a symbolic witness of their *capacity* to render divine homage."

Sri Yukteswar went on to read the marvellous story of Lazarus' resurrection. At its conclusion Master fell into a long silence, the sacred book open on his knee.

"I too was privileged to behold a similar miracle." My guru finally spoke with solemn unction. "Lahiri Mahasaya resurrected one of my friends from the dead."

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* *John* 11:1–4 (Bible).

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The young lads at my side smiled with keen interest. There was enough of the boy in me, too, to enjoy not only the philosophy but, in particular, any story I could get Sri Yukteswar to relate about his wondrous experiences with his guru.

"My friend Rama and I were inseparable," Master began. "Because he was shy and reclusive, he chose to visit our guru Lahiri Mahasaya only during the hours between midnight and dawn, when the crowd of daytime disciples was absent. As I was Rama's closest friend, he confided to me many of his deep spiritual experiences. I found inspiration in his ideal companionship." My guru's face softened with memories.

"Rama was suddenly put to a severe test," Sri Yukteswar continued. "He contracted the disease of Asiatic cholera. As our master never objected to the services of physicians at times of serious illness, two specialists were summoned. Amidst the frantic rush of ministering to the stricken man, I was deeply praying to Lahiri Mahasaya for help. I hurried to his home and sobbed out the story.

"'The doctors are seeing Rama. He will be well.' My guru smiled jovially.

"I returned with a light heart to my friend's bedside, only to find him in a dying state.

"'He cannot last more than one or two hours,' one of the physicians told me with a gesture of despair. Once more I hastened to Lahiri Mahasaya.

"'The doctors are conscientious men. I am sure Rama will be well.' The master dismissed me blithely.

"At Rama's place I found both doctors gone. One had left me a note: 'We have done our best, but his case is hopeless.'

"My friend was indeed the picture of a dying man. I did not understand how Lahiri Mahasaya's words could fail to come true, yet the sight of Rama's rapidly ebbing life kept suggesting to my mind: 'All is over now.' Tossing thus on alternating waves of faith and doubt, I ministered to my friend as best I could. He roused himself to cry out:

"'Yukteswar, run to Master and tell him I am gone. Ask him to bless my body before its last rites.' With these words Rama sighed

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heavily and gave up the ghost.*

"I wept for an hour by his bedside. Always a lover of quiet, now he had attained the utter stillness of death. Another disciple came in; I asked him to remain in the house until I returned. Half dazed, I trudged back to my guru.

"'How is Rama now?' Lahiri Mahasaya's face was wreathed in smiles.

"'Sir, you will soon see how he is,' I blurted out emotionally. 'In a few hours you will see his body, before it is carried to the crematory grounds.' I broke down and moaned openly.

"'Yukteswar, control yourself. Sit calmly and meditate.' My guru retired into *samadhi*. The afternoon and night passed in unbroken silence; I struggled unsuccessfully to regain an inner composure.

"At dawn Lahiri Mahasaya glanced at me consolingly. 'I see you are still disturbed. Why didn't you explain yesterday that you expected me to give Rama tangible aid in the form of some medicine?' The master pointed to a cup-shaped lamp containing crude castor oil. 'Fill a little bottle with oil from the lamp; put seven drops in Rama's mouth.'

"'Sir,' I remonstrated, 'he has been dead since yesterday noon. Of what use is the oil now?'

"'Never mind, just do as I ask.' My guru's cheerful mood was incomprehensible to me; I was still in an unassuaged agony of bereavement. Pouring out a small amount of oil, I departed for Rama's house.

"I found my friend's body rigid in the death-clasp. Paying no attention to his ghastly condition, I opened his lips with my right index finger; and managed, with my left hand and the help of the cork, to put the oil drop by drop over his clenched teeth. As the seventh drop touched his cold lips, Rama shivered violently. His muscles from head to foot vibrated as he sat up wonderingly.

"'I saw Lahiri Mahasaya in a blaze of light!' he cried. 'He shone

* A cholera victim is often rational and fully conscious right up to the moment of death.

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like the sun. "Arise, forsake your sleep," he commanded me. "Come with Yukteswar to see me."'

"I could scarcely believe my eyes when Rama dressed himself and was strong enough after that fatal sickness to walk to the home of our guru. There he prostrated himself before Lahiri Mahasaya with tears of gratitude.

"The master was beside himself with mirth. His eyes twinkled at me mischievously.

"'Yukteswar,' he said, 'surely henceforth you will not fail to carry with you a bottle of castor oil. Whenever you see a corpse, just administer the oil. Why, seven drops of lamp oil must surely foil the power of Yama!'

"'Guruji, you are ridiculing me. I don't understand; please point out the nature of my error.'

"'I told you twice that Rama would be well; yet you could not fully believe me,' Lahiri Mahasaya explained. 'I did not mean the doctors would be able to cure him; I remarked only that they were in attendance. I didn't want to interfere with the physicians; they have to live, too.' In a voice resounding with joy, my guru added, 'Always know that the omnipotent Paramatman can heal anyone, doctor or no doctor.'

"'I see my mistake,' I acknowledged remorsefully. 'I know now that your simple word is binding on the whole cosmos.'"

As Sri Yukteswar finished the awesome story, one of the Ranchi lads ventured a question that, from a child, was doubly understandable.

"Sir," he said, "why did your guru send castor oil?"

"Child, giving the oil had no special meaning. Because I had expected something material, Lahiri Mahasaya chose the nearby oil as an objective symbol to awaken my greater faith. The master allowed Rama to die, because I had partially doubted. But the divine guru knew that inasmuch as he had said the disciple would be well, the healing must take place, even though he had to cure Rama of death, a disease usually final!"

Sri Yukteswar dismissed the little group, and motioned me to a blanket seat at his feet.

"Yogananda," he said with unusual gravity, "you have been

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surrounded from birth by direct disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya. The great master lived his sublime life in partial seclusion, and steadfastly refused to permit his followers to build any organization around his teachings. He made, nevertheless, a significant prediction.

"'About fifty years after my passing,' he said, 'an account of my life will be written because of a deep interest in yoga that will arise in the West. The message of yoga will encircle the globe. It will aid in establishing the brotherhood of man: a unity based on humanity's direct perception of the One Father.'

"My son Yogananda," Sri Yukteswar went on, "you must do your part in spreading that message, and in writing that sacred life."

Fifty years after Lahiri Mahasaya's passing in 1895 culminated in 1945, the year of completion of this present book. I cannot but be struck by the coincidence that the year 1945 has also ushered in a new age — the era of revolutionary atomic energies. All thoughtful minds turn as never before to the urgent problems of peace and brotherhood, lest the continued use of physical force banish all men along with the problems.

Though the works of the human race disappear tracelessly by time or bomb, the sun does not falter in its course; the stars keep their invariable vigil. Cosmic law cannot be stayed or changed, and man would do well to put himself in harmony with it. If the cosmos is against might, if the sun wars not in the heavens but retires at dueful time to give the stars their little sway, what avails our mailed fist? Shall any peace come out of it? Not cruelty but goodwill upholds the universal sinews; a humanity at peace will know the endless fruits of victory, sweeter to the taste than any nurtured on the soil of blood.

The effective League of Nations will be a natural, nameless league of human hearts. The broad sympathies and discerning insight needed for the healing of earthly woes cannot flow from a mere intellectual consideration of human diversities, but from knowledge of men's deepest unity — kinship with God. Toward realization of the world's highest ideal — peace through brotherhood — may yoga, the science of personal communion with the Divine, spread in time to all men in all lands.

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Though India possesses a civilization more ancient than that of any other country, few historians have noted that her feat of survival is by no means an accident, but a logical incident in the record of devotion to the eternal verities that India has offered through her best men in every generation. By sheer continuity of being, by intransitivity before the ages (can dusty scholars truly tell us how many?), India has given the worthiest answer of any people to the challenge of time.

The Biblical story of Abraham's plea to the Lord* that the city of Sodom be spared if ten righteous men could be found therein, and the Divine Reply: "I will not destroy it for ten's sake," gains new meaning in the light of India's escape from oblivion. Gone are the empires of mighty nations, skilled in the arts of war, that once were India's contemporaries: ancient Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, Rome.

The Lord's answer clearly shows that a land lives, not in its material achievements, but in its masterpieces of man.

Let the divine words be heard again, in this twentieth century, twice dyed in blood ere half over: No nation that can produce ten men who are great in the eyes of the Unbribable Judge shall know extinction.

Heeding such persuasions, India has proved herself not witless against the thousand cunnings of Time. Self-realized masters in every century have hallowed her soil. Modern Christlike sages, like Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar, rise up to proclaim that a knowledge of yoga, the science of God-realization, is vital to man's happiness and to a nation's longevity.

Very scanty information about the life of Lahiri Mahasaya and his universal doctrine has ever appeared in print.† For three decades in India, America, and Europe I have found a deep and sincere interest in his message of liberating yoga; a written account

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* *Genesis* 18:23–32 (Bible).

† A short biography in Bengali, *Sri Sri Shyama Charan Lahiri Mahasaya*, by Swami Satyananda, appeared in 1941. From its pages I have translated a few passages for this section on Lahiri Mahasaya.

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of the master's life, even as he foretold, is now needed in the West, where lives of the great modern yogis are little known.

Lahiri Mahasaya was born on September 30, 1828, into a pious Brahmin family of ancient lineage. His birthplace was the village of Ghurni in the Nadia district near Krishnanagar, Bengal. He was the only son of Smt. Muktakashi, second wife of the esteemed Gaur Mohan Lahiri (whose first wife, after the birth of three sons, had died during a pilgrimage). The boy's mother passed away during his childhood. We have little information about her, except a revealing fact: she was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva, scripturally designated as the "King of Yogis."

The boy, whose full name was Shyama Charan Lahiri, spent his early years at the ancestral home in Ghurni. At the age of three or four he was often observed sitting under the sands in a certain yoga posture, his body completely hidden except for the head.

The Lahiri estate was destroyed in the winter of 1833, when the nearby Jalangi River changed its course and disappeared into the depths of the Ganges. One of the Shiva temples founded by the Lahiris went into the river along with the family home. A devotee rescued the stone image of Lord Shiva from the swirling waters and placed it in a new temple, now well known as the Ghurni Shiva Site.

Gaur Mohan Lahiri and his family left Ghurni and became residents of Banaras, where the father immediately erected a Shiva temple. He conducted his household along the lines of Vedic discipline, with regular observance of ceremonial worship, acts of charity, and scriptural study. Just and open-minded, however, he did not ignore the beneficial current of modern ideas.

The boy Lahiri took lessons in Hindi and Urdu in Banaras study groups. He attended a school conducted by Joy Narayan Ghosal, receiving instruction in Sanskrit, Bengali, French, and English. Applying himself to a close study of the Vedas, the young yogi listened eagerly to scriptural discussions by learned Brahmins, including a Mahratta pundit named Nag-Bhatta.

Shyama Charan was a kind, gentle, and courageous youth, beloved by all his companions. With a well-proportioned, healthy, and powerful body, he excelled in swimming and in many feats of manual skill.

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In 1846 Shyama Charan Lahiri was married to Srimati Kashi Moni, daughter of Sri Debnarayan Sanyal. A model Indian housewife, Kashi Moni cheerfully performed her home duties and observed the householder's obligation to serve guests and the poor. Two saintly sons, Tincouri and Ducouri, and two daughters blessed the union. At the age of twenty-three, in 1851, Lahiri Mahasaya took the post of accountant in the Military Engineering Department of the British government. He received many promotions during the time of his service. Thus not only was he a master before God's eyes but also a success in the little human drama in which he played a humble role as an office worker in the world.

At various times the Engineering Department transferred Lahiri Mahasaya to its offices in Gazipur, Mirjapur, Naini Tal, Danapur, and Banaras. After the death of his father, the young man assumed responsibility for the members of his entire family. He bought for them a home in the secluded Garudeswar Mohulla neighbourhood of Banaras.

It was in his thirty-third year that Lahiri Mahasaya* saw fulfillment of the purpose for which he had reincarnated on earth. He met his great guru, Babaji, near Ranikhet in the Himalayas, and was initiated by him into *Kriya Yoga*.

This auspicious event did not happen to Lahiri Mahasaya alone; it was a fortunate moment for all the human race. The lost, or long-vanished, highest art of yoga was again being brought to light.

As the Ganges† came from heaven to earth, in the Puranic story, offering a divine draught to the parched devotee Bhagirath, so in 1861 the celestial river of *Kriya Yoga* began to flow from the secret fastnesses of the Himalayas into the dusty haunts of men.

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* The Sanskrit religious title of *Mahasaya* means "large-minded."

† The waters of Mother Ganga, holy river of the Hindus, have their origin in an icy cave of the Himalayas amidst the eternal snows and silences. Down the centuries thousands of saints have delighted in remaining near the Ganges; they have left along its banks an aura of blessing. (See p. 195 n.)

An extraordinary, perhaps unique, feature of the Ganges River is its unpollutability. No bacteria live in its changeless sterility. Millions of Hindus, without harm, use its waters for bathing and drinking. This fact is baffling to modern scientists. One of

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them, Dr. John Howard Northrop, co-winner of the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1946, recently said: "We know that the Ganges is highly contaminated. Yet Indians drink out of it, swim in it, and are apparently not affected." He added, hopefully: "Perhaps bacteriophage [the virus that destroys bacteria] renders the river sterile."

The Vedas inculcate reverence for all natural phenomena. The devout Hindu well understands the praise of St. Francis of Assisi: "Blessed be my Lord for our Sister Water, so useful, humble, chaste, and precious."

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CHAPTER 33

Babaji, Yogi-Christ of Modern India

The Northern Himalayan crags near Badrinarayan are still blessed by the living presence of Babaji, guru of Lahiri Mahasaya. The secluded master has retained his physical form for centuries, perhaps for millenniums. The deathless Babaji is an *avatara*. This Sanskrit word means "descent"; its roots are *ava*, "down," and *tri*, "to pass." In the Hindu scriptures, *avatara* signifies the descent of Divinity into flesh.

"Babaji's spiritual state is beyond human comprehension," Sri Yukteswar explained to me. "The dwarfed vision of men cannot pierce to his transcendental star. One attempts in vain even to picture the avatar's attainment. It is inconceivable."

The *Upanishads* have minutely classified every stage of spiritual advancement. A *siddha* ("perfected being") has progressed from the state of a *jivanmukta* ("freed while living") to that of a *paramukta* ("supremely free" — full power over death); the latter has completely escaped from the mayic thralldom and its reincarnational round. The *paramukta* therefore seldom returns to a physical body; if he does return, he is an avatar, a divinely appointed medium of supernal blessings on the world. An avatar is unsubject to the

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universal economy; his pure body, visible as a light image, is free from any debt to Nature.

The casual gaze may see nothing extraordinary in an avatar's form; but, on occasion, it casts no shadow nor makes any footprint on the ground. These are outward symbolic proofs of an inward freedom from darkness and material bondage. Such a God-man alone knows the Truth behind the relativities of life and death. Omar Khayyam, so grossly misunderstood, sang of this liberated man in the immortal scripture, the *Rubaiyat:**

> "Ah, Moon of my Delight who know'st no wane,
> The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again;
> How oft hereafter rising shall she look
> Through this same Garden after me — in vain!"

The "Moon of Delight who know'st no wane" is God, eternal Polaris, anachronous never. The "Moon of Heav'n rising once again" is the outward cosmos, fettered to the law of periodic recurrence. Through Self-realization the Persian seer had forever freed himself from compulsory returns to earth: the "garden" of Nature or *Maya*. "How oft hereafter rising shall she look after me — in vain!" What frustration of search by a wondering universe for an absolute omission!

Christ expressed his freedom in another way: "And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."†

Spacious with omnipresence, could Christ indeed be followed except in the overarching Spirit?

Krishna, Rama, Buddha, and Patanjali were among the ancient Indian avatars. A considerable poetic literature in Tamil has grown up around Agastya, a South Indian avatar. He worked many miracles during the centuries preceding and following the Christian era, and is credited with retaining his physical form even to this day.

Babaji's mission in India has been to assist prophets in carrying

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* Edward FitzGerald's translation.

† *Matthew* 8:19–20 (Bible).

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out their special dispensations. He thus qualifies for the scriptural classification of *Mahavatar* (Great Avatar). He has stated that he gave yoga initiation to Shankara,* reorganizer of the Swami Order, and to Kabir, famous medieval master. The chief nineteenth-century disciple was, as we know, Lahiri Mahasaya, revivalist of the lost *Kriya* art.

Babaji is ever in communion with Christ; together they send out vibrations of redemption and have planned the spiritual technique of salvation for this age. The work of these two fully illumined masters — one with a body, and one without a body — is to inspire the nations to forsake wars, race hatreds, religious sectarianism, and the boomerang evils of materialism. Babaji is well aware of the trend of modern times, especially of the influence and complexities of Western civilization, and realizes the necessity of spreading the self-liberations of yoga equally in the West and in the East.

That there is no historical reference to Babaji need not surprise us. The great guru has never openly appeared in any century; the misinterpreting glare of publicity has no place in his millennial plans. Like the Creator, the sole but silent Power, Babaji works in a humble obscurity.

Great prophets like Christ and Krishna come to earth for a specific and spectacular purpose; they depart as soon as it is accomplished. Other avatars, like Babaji, undertake work that is concerned more with the slow evolutionary progress of man during the centuries than with any one outstanding event of history. Such masters always veil themselves from the gross public gaze and have the power to become invisible at will. For these reasons, and because they generally instruct their disciples to maintain silence about them, a number of towering spiritual figures remain world-unknown. I give in these pages on Babaji merely a hint of his life — only a few facts that he deems fitting and helpful to be publicly imparted.

No limiting facts about Babaji's family or birthplace, dear to

* Shankara, whose historically known guru was Govinda Jati, received initiation into *Kriya Yoga* from Babaji in Banaras. Babaji, in recounting the story to Lahiri Mahasaya and Swami Kebalananda, gave many fascinating details of his meeting with the great monist.

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the annalist's heart, have ever been discovered. His speech is generally in Hindi, but he converses easily in any language. He has adopted the simple name of Babaji (Revered Father); other titles of respect given him by Lahiri Mahasaya's disciples are Mahamuni Babaji Maharaj (Supreme Ecstatic Master), Maha Yogi (the Great Yogi), and Trambak Baba or Shiva Baba (titles of avatars of Shiva). Does it matter that we know not the patronymic of a fully released master?

"Whenever anyone utters with reverence the name of Babaji," Lahiri Mahasaya said, "that devotee attracts an instant spiritual blessing."

The deathless guru bears no mark of age on his body; he appears to be a youth of not more than twenty-five. Fair-skinned, of medium build and height, Babaji's beautiful, strong body radiates a perceptible glow. His eyes are dark, calm, and tender; his long, lustrous hair is copper-coloured. Sometimes Babaji's face closely resembles that of Lahiri Mahasaya. On occasion the similarity was so striking that Lahiri Mahasaya, in his later years, might have passed as the father of the youthful-looking Babaji.

Swami Kebalananda, my saintly Sanskrit tutor, spent some time with Babaji* in the Himalayas.

"The peerless master moves with his group from place to place in the mountains," Kebalananda told me. "His small band contains two highly advanced American disciples. After Babaji has been in one locality for some time, he says: *'Dera ḍanḍa uthao.'* ('Let us lift our camp and staff.') He carries a *ḍanḍa* (bamboo staff). His words are the signal for moving with his group instantaneously to another place. He does not always employ this method of astral travel; sometimes he goes on foot from peak to peak.

"Babaji can be seen or recognized by others only when he so desires. He is known to have appeared in many slightly different forms to various devotees — sometimes with beard and moustache

* Babaji (revered father) is a common title; many noted teachers in India are addressed as "Babaji." None of them, however, is Babaji the guru of Lahiri Mahasaya. The existence of the Mahavatar was revealed to the public for the first time in 1946, in *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

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and sometimes without them. His undecayable body requires no food; the master, therefore, seldom eats. As a social courtesy to visiting disciples, he occasionally accepts fruits, or rice cooked in milk and clarified butter.

"Two amazing incidents of Babaji's life are known to me," Kebalananda went on. "His disciples were sitting one night around a huge fire that was blazing for a sacred Vedic ceremony. The guru suddenly seized a burning brand and lightly struck the bare shoulder of a *chela* who was close to the fire.

"'Sir, how cruel!' Lahiri Mahasaya, who was present, made this remonstrance.

"'Would you rather have seen him burned to ashes before your eyes, according to the decree of his past karma?'

"With these words Babaji placed his healing hand on the *chela's* disfigured shoulder. 'I have freed you tonight from painful death. The karmic law has been satisfied through your slight suffering by fire.'

"On another occasion Babaji's sacred circle was disturbed by the arrival of a stranger. He had climbed with astonishing skill to the nearly inaccessible ledge near the guru's camp.

"'Sir, you must be the great Babaji.' The man's face was lit with inexpressible reverence. 'For months I have pursued a ceaseless search for you among these forbidding crags. I implore you to accept me as a disciple.'

"When the great guru made no response, the man pointed to the rock-lined chasm below the ledge. 'If you refuse me, I will jump from this mountain. Life has no further value if I cannot win your guidance to the Divine.'

"'Jump then,' Babaji said unemotionally. 'I cannot accept you in your present state of development.'

"The man immediately hurled himself over the cliff. Babaji instructed the shocked disciples to fetch the stranger's body. After they had returned with the mangled form, the master placed his hand on the dead man. Lo! he opened his eyes and prostrated himself humbly before the omnipotent guru.

"'You are now ready for discipleship.' Babaji beamed lovingly on his resurrected *chela*. 'You have courageously passed a difficult

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test.* Death shall not touch you again; now you are one of our immortal flock.' Then he spoke his usual words of departure, *'Dera ∂an∂a uthao'*; the whole group vanished from the mountain."

An avatar lives in the omnipresent Spirit; for him there is no distance inverse to the square. Only one reason, therefore, motivates Babaji in maintaining his physical form from century to century: the desire to furnish humanity with a concrete example of its own possibilities. Were man never vouchsafed a glimpse of Divinity in the flesh, he would remain oppressed by the heavy mayic delusion that he cannot transcend his mortality.

Jesus knew from the beginning the sequence of his life; he passed through each event not for himself, not from any karmic compulsion, but solely for the upliftment of reflective human beings. The four evangelists — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — recorded the ineffable drama for the benefit of later generations.

For Babaji, also, there is no relativity of past, present, future; from the beginning he has known all phases of his life. Accommodating himself to the limited understanding of men, he has played many acts of his divine life in the presence of one or more witnesses. Thus it came about that a disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya was present when Babaji deemed the time to be ripe for him to proclaim the possibility of bodily immortality. He uttered this promise before Ram Gopal Muzumdar, that it might finally become known for the inspiration of other seeking hearts. The great ones speak their words and participate in the seemingly natural course of events, solely for the good of man, even as Christ said: "Father...I knew that thou hearest me always: but *because of the people which stand by I said it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."†

During my visit at Ranbajpur with Ram Gopal, "the sleepless

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* The test concerned obedience. When the illumined master said: "Jump," the man obeyed. Had he hesitated, he would have disproved his assertion that he considered his life worthless without Babaji's guidance. Had he hesitated, he would have revealed that he lacked complete trust in the guru. Therefore, though drastic and unusual, the test was a perfect one in the circumstances.

† *John* 11:41–42 (Bible).

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saint,"* he related the wondrous story of his first meeting with Babaji.

"I sometimes left my isolated cave to sit at the feet of Lahiri Mahasaya in Banaras," Ram Gopal told me. "One midnight as I was silently meditating in a group of his disciples, the master made a surprising request.

"'Ram Gopal,' he said, 'go at once to the Dasaswamedh bathing *ghat*.'

"I soon reached the secluded spot. The night was bright with moonlight and the glittering stars. After I had sat in patient silence for a while, my attention was drawn to a huge stone slab near my feet. It rose gradually, revealing an underground cave. As the stone became stationary, held up by some unknown means, the draped form of a young and surpassingly lovely woman emerged from the cave and levitated high in the air. Surrounded by a soft halo, she slowly descended in front of me and stood motionless, steeped in ecstasy. She finally stirred, and spoke gently.

"'I am Mataji,† the sister of Babaji. I have asked him and also Lahiri Mahasaya to come to my cave tonight to discuss a matter of great importance.'

"A nebulous light was rapidly floating over the Ganges; the strange luminescence was reflected in the opaque waters. It approached nearer and nearer until, with a blinding flash, it appeared by the side of Mataji and condensed itself instantly into the human form of Lahiri Mahasaya. He bowed humbly at the feet of the woman saint.

"Before I had recovered from my bewilderment, I was further wonder-struck to behold a circling mass of mystical light travelling in the sky. Descending swiftly, the flaming whirlpool neared our group and materialized itself into the body of a beautiful youth. I understood at once that he was Babaji. He looked like Lahiri

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* The omnipresent yogi who observed that I failed to bow before the Tarakeswar shrine (chapter 13).

† "Holy Mother." Mataji also has lived through the centuries; she is almost as far advanced spiritually as her brother. She remains in ecstasy in a secret underground cave near the Dasaswamedh *ghat*.

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Mahasaya; though Babaji appeared much younger than his disciple, and had long, bright hair.

"Lahiri Mahasaya, Mataji, and I knelt at the great guru's feet. An ethereal sensation of beatific glory thrilled every fiber of my being as I touched his divine flesh.

"'Blessed sister,' Babaji said, 'I am intending to shed my form and plunge into the Infinite Current.'

"'I have already glimpsed your plan, beloved master. I wanted to discuss it with you tonight. Why should you leave your body?' The glorious woman looked at him beseechingly.

"'What is the difference if I wear a visible or an invisible wave on the ocean of my Spirit?'

"Mataji replied with a quaint flash of wit. 'Deathless Guru, if it makes no difference, then please do not ever relinquish your form.'*

"'Be it so,' Babaji said solemnly. 'I shall never leave my physical body. It will always remain visible to at least a small number of people on this earth. The Lord has spoken His own wish through your lips.'

"As I listened in awe to the conversation between these exalted beings, the great guru turned to me with a benign gesture.

"'Fear not, Ram Gopal,' he said, 'you are blessed to be a witness at the scene of this immortal promise.'

"As the sweet melody of Babaji's voice faded away, his form and that of Lahiri Mahasaya slowly levitated and moved backward over the Ganges. An aureole of dazzling light surrounded their bodies as they vanished into the night sky. Mataji's form floated to the cave and descended; the stone slab came down and closed over the cave, as if moved by invisible hands.

"Infinitely inspired, I wended my way back to Lahiri Mahasaya's place. As I bowed before him in the early dawn, my

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* This incident reminds one of Thales. The great Greek philosopher taught that there is no difference between life and death.

"Why, then," inquired a critic, "do you not die?"

"Because," answered Thales, "it makes no difference."

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guru smiled at me understandingly.

"'I am happy for you, Ram Gopal,' he said. 'Your desire to meet Babaji and Mataji, which you have often expressed to me, has found at last a wondrous fulfillment.'

"My fellow disciples informed me that Lahiri Mahasaya had not moved from his dais since my departure at midnight.

"'He gave a wonderful discourse on immortality after you had left for the Dasaswamedh *ghat*,' one of the *chelas* told me. For the first time I fully realized the truth in the scriptural verses which state that a man of Self-realization can appear at different places in two or more bodies at the same time.

"Lahiri Mahasaya later explained to me many metaphysical points concerning the hidden divine plan for this earth," Ram Gopal concluded. "Babaji has been chosen by God to remain in his body for the duration of this particular world cycle. Ages will come and go — still the deathless master,* beholding the drama of the centuries, shall be present on this stage terrestrial."

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* "If a man keep my saying (remain unbrokenly in the Christ Consciousness), he shall never see death" — (*John* 8:51, Bible).

In these words Jesus was not referring to immortal life in the physical body—a monotonous confinement one would hardly mete out to a sinner, much less a saint! The illumined man of whom Christ spoke is one who has awakened from the deathly trance of ignorance to Eternal Life. (See chapter 43.)

Man's essential nature is formless omnipresent Spirit. Compulsory or karmic embodiment is the result of *avidya*, ignorance. The Hindu scriptures teach that birth and death are manifestations of *maya*, cosmic delusion. Birth and death have meaning only in the world of relativity.

Babaji is not limited to a physical body or to this planet, but, at God's wish, is fulfilling a special mission for the earth.

Great masters like Swami Pranabananda (see p. 253) who come back to earth in new embodiments do so for reasons best known to themselves. Their incarnations on this planet are not subject to the rigid restrictions of karma. Such voluntary returns are called *vyutthana* or reversion to earthly life after *maya* has ceased to blind.

Whatever be the manner of his passing, whether ordinary or phenomenal, a fully God-realized master is able to resurrect his body and to appear in it before the eyes of earth dwellers. Materializing the atoms of a physical body can scarcely strain the powers of one who is united with the Lord — Him whose solar systems defy computation!

"I lay down my life that I might take it again," Christ proclaimed. "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" — (*John* 10:17–18, Bible).

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CHAPTER 34

Materializing a Palace in the Himalayas

"Babaji's first meeting with Lahiri Mahasaya is an enthralling story, and one of the few that give us a detailed glimpse of the deathless guru."

These words were Swami Kebalananda's preamble to a wondrous tale. The first time he recounted it I was literally spellbound. On many other occasions I coaxed my gentle Sanskrit tutor to repeat the story, which was later told me in substantially the same words by Sri Yukteswar. Both these disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya had heard the awesome tale direct from the lips of their guru.

"My first meeting with Babaji took place in my thirty-third year," Lahiri Mahasaya had said. "In the autumn of 1861 I was stationed in Danapur as an accountant in the Military Engineering Department of the Government. One morning the office manager summoned me.

"'Lahiri,' he said, 'a telegram has just come from our main office. You are to be transferred to Ranikhet, where an army post* is now being established.'

"With one servant, I set out on the 500-mile trip. Travelling by

* Later a military sanatorium. By 1861 the British Government had already established in India a telegraphic system.

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horse and buggy, we arrived in thirty days at the Himalayan site of Ranikhet.*

"My office duties were not onerous; I was able to spend many hours roaming in the magnificent hills. A rumour reached me that great saints blessed the region with their presence; I felt a strong desire to see them. During a ramble one early afternoon, I was astounded to hear a distant voice calling my name. I continued my vigorous upward climb on Drongiri Mountain. A slight uneasiness beset me at the thought that I might not be able to retrace my steps before darkness descended over the jungle.

"I finally reached a small clearing whose sides were dotted with caves. On one of the rocky ledges stood a smiling young man, extending his hand in welcome. I noticed with astonishment that, except for his copper-coloured hair, he bore a remarkable resemblance to myself.

"'Lahiri,† you have come!' The saint addressed me affectionately in Hindi. 'Rest here in this cave. It was I who called you.'

"I entered a neat little grotto that contained several woolen blankets and a few *kamandalus* (water pots).

"'Lahiri, do you remember that seat?' The yogi pointed to a folded blanket in one corner.

"'No, sir.' Somewhat dazed at the strangeness of my adventure, I added, 'I must leave now, before nightfall. I have business in the morning at my office.'

"The mysterious saint replied in English, 'The office was brought for you, and not you for the office.'

"I was dumbfounded that this forest ascetic should not only speak English but also paraphrase the words of Christ.‡

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* Ranikhet, in the Almora district, is situated at the foot of Nanda Devi, one of the highest Himalayan peaks (25,661 feet).

† Babaji actually said "Gangadhar," the name by which Lahiri Mahasaya had been known in his previous incarnation. Gangadhar (literally, "he who holds Ganga, the river Ganges") is one of the names of Lord Shiva. According to the Puranic legend, the holy river Ganga descended from heaven. Lest earth be unable to endure the force of its powerful descent, Lord Shiva caught Ganga's waters in his matted locks, whence he released them in a benign flow. The metaphysical significance of "Gangadhar" is: "he who has control over the 'river' of life current in the spine."

‡ "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" — *Mark* 2:27 (Bible).

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"'I see my telegram took effect.' The yogi's remark was incomprehensible to me; I asked its meaning.

"'I refer to the telegram that summoned you to these isolated parts. It was I who silently suggested to the mind of your superior officer that you be transferred to Ranikhet. When one feels his unity with mankind, all minds become transmitting stations through which he can work at will.' He added, 'Lahiri, surely this cave seems familiar to you?'

"As I maintained a bewildered silence, the saint approached and struck me gently on the forehead. At his magnetic touch, a wondrous current swept through my brain, releasing the sweet seed-memories of my previous life.

"'I remember!' My voice was half choked with joyous sobs. 'You are my guru Babaji, who has belonged to me always! Scenes of the past arise vividly in my mind; here in this cave I spent many years of my last incarnation!' As ineffable recollections overwhelmed me, I tearfully embraced my master's feet.

"'For more than three decades I have waited for you to return to me.' Babaji's voice rang with celestial love.

"'You slipped away and disappeared into the tumultuous waves of the life beyond death. The magic wand of your karma touched you, and you were gone! Though you lost sight of me, never did I lose sight of you! I pursued you over the luminescent astral sea where the glorious angels sail. Through gloom, storm, upheaval, and light I followed you, like a mother bird guarding her young. As you lived out your human term of womb life, and emerged a babe, my eye was ever on you. When you covered your tiny form in the lotus posture under the Ghurni sands in childhood, I was invisibly present. Patiently, month after month, year after year, I have watched over you, waiting for this perfect day. Now you are with me! Here is your cave, loved of yore; I have kept it ever clean and ready for you. Here is your hallowed *asana*-blanket, where daily you sat to fill your expanding heart with God. Here is your bowl, from which you often drank the nectar prepared by me. See how I have kept the brass cup brightly polished, that someday you might drink again from it. My own, do you now understand?'

"'My guru, what can I say?' I murmured brokenly. 'Where has

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one ever heard of such deathless love?' I gazed long and ecstatically at my eternal treasure, my guru in life and death.

"'Lahiri, you need purification. Drink the oil in this bowl and lie down by the river.' Babaji's practical wisdom, I reflected with a quick, reminiscent smile, was ever to the fore.

"I obeyed his directions. Though the icy Himalayan night was descending, a warm, comforting radiation began to pulsate within me. I marvelled. Was the unknown oil endued with a cosmical heat?

"Bitter winds whipped around me in the darkness, shrieking a fierce challenge. The chill wavelets of the Gogash River lapped now and then over my body, outstretched on the rocky bank. Tigers howled nearby, but my heart was free of fear; the radiant force newly generated within me conveyed an assurance of unassailable protection. Several hours passed swiftly; faded memories of another life wove themselves into the present brilliant pattern of reunion with my divine guru.

"My solitary musings were interrupted by the sound of approaching footsteps. In the darkness, a man's hand gently helped me to my feet, and gave me some dry clothing.

"'Come, brother,' my companion said. 'The master awaits you.' He led the way through the forest. As we came to a turn in the path, the somber night was suddenly lit by a steady luminosity in the distance.

"'Can that be the sunrise?' I inquired. 'Surely the whole night has not passed?'

"'The hour is midnight.' My guide laughed softly. 'Yonder light is the glow of a golden palace, materialized here tonight by the peerless Babaji. In the dim past, you once expressed a desire to enjoy the beauties of a palace. Our master is now satisfying your wish, thus freeing you from the last bond of your karma.'* He added, 'The magnificent palace will be the scene of your initiation tonight into *Kriya Yoga*. All your brothers here join in a paean of welcome, rejoicing at the end of your exile. Behold!'

"Before us stood a vast palace of dazzling gold. Ornamented

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* The karmic law requires that every human wish find ultimate fulfillment. Nonspiritual desires are thus the chain that binds man to the reincarnational wheel.

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with countless jewels, set amid landscaped gardens, reflected in tranquil pools—a spectacle of unparalleled grandeur! Towering archways were intricately inlaid with great diamonds, sapphires, and emeralds. Men of angelic countenance were stationed by gates redly resplendent with rubies.

"I followed my companion into a spacious reception hall. The odours of incense and roses wafted through the air; dim lamps shed a multicoloured glow. Small groups of devotees, some fair, some dark-skinned, chanted softly or sat silently in the meditative posture, immersed in inner peace. A vibrant joy pervaded the atmosphere.

"'Feast your eyes; enjoy the artistic splendours of this palace; for it has been brought into being solely in your honour,' my guide remarked, smiling sympathetically as I exclaimed in wonder.

"'Brother,' I said, 'the beauty of this structure surpasses the bounds of human imagination. Please explain to me the mystery of its origin.'

"'I will gladly enlighten you.' My companion's dark eyes sparkled with wisdom. 'There is nothing inexplicable about this materialization. The whole cosmos is a projected thought of the Creator. The heavy clod of the earth, floating in space, is a dream of God's. He made all things out of His mind, even as man in his dream consciousness reproduces and vivifies a creation with its creatures.

"'The Lord first formed the earth as an idea. He quickened it; atomic energy and then matter came into being. He coordinated earth atoms into a solid sphere. All its molecules are held together by the will of God. When He withdraws His will, all earth atoms will be transformed into energy. Atomic energy will return to its source: consciousness. The earth idea will disappear from objectivity.

"'The substance of a dream is held in materialization by the subconscious thought of the dreamer. When that cohesive thought is withdrawn in wakefulness, the dream and its elements dissolve. A man closes his eyes and erects a dream creation, which, on awakening, he effortlessly dematerializes. He follows the divine archetypal pattern. Similarly, when he awakens in cosmic consciousness, he effortlessly dematerializes the illusion of a cosmic-dream universe.

"'In tune with the infinite all-accomplishing Will, Babaji is able to command the elemental atoms to combine and manifest

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themselves in any form. This golden palace, instantaneously brought into being, is real—in the same sense that the earth is real. Babaji created this beautiful mansion out of his mind and is holding its atoms together by the power of his will, even as God's thought created the earth and His will maintains it.' He added, 'When this structure has served its purpose, Babaji will dematerialize it.'

"As I remained silent in awe, my guide made a sweeping gesture. 'This shimmering palace, superbly embellished with jewels, has not been built by human effort; its gold and gems were not laboriously mined. It stands solidly, a monumental challenge to man.* Whoever realizes himself as a son of God, even as Babaji has done, can reach any goal by the infinite powers hidden within him. A common stone secretly contains stupendous atomic energies;† even so, the lowliest mortal is a powerhouse of divinity.'

"The sage picked up from a nearby table a graceful vase whose handle was blazing with diamonds. 'Our great guru created this palace by solidifying myriads of free cosmic rays,' he went on. 'Touch this vase and its diamonds; they will pass all the tests of sensory experience.'

"I examined the vase; its jewels were worthy of a king's collection. I passed my hand over the room walls, thick with glistening gold. Deep satisfaction spread over my mind. A desire, hidden in my subconsciousness from lives now gone, seemed simultaneously gratified and extinguished.

"My stately companion led me through ornate arches and corridors into a series of chambers richly furnished in the style of an emperor's palace. We entered an immense hall. In the centre stood a golden throne, encrusted with jewels that shed a dazzling medley of colours. There, in lotus posture, sat the supreme Babaji. I knelt on the shining floor at his feet.

"'Lahiri, are you still feasting on your dream desires for a golden palace?' My guru's eyes were twinkling like his own sapphires.

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* "What is a miracle? 'Tis a reproach,/'Tis an implicit satire on mankind."—*Edward Young, "Night Thoughts."*

† The theory of the atomic structure of matter is expounded in ancient Indian *Vaiseshika* and *Nyaya* treatises. "Vast worlds lie within the hollows of each atom, multifarious as the motes in a sunbeam."—*Yoga Vasishtha.*

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'Wake! All your earthly thirsts are about to be quenched forever.' He murmured some mystic words of blessing. 'My son, arise. Receive your initiation into the kingdom of God through *Kriya Yoga*.'

"Babaji stretched out his hand; a *homa* (sacrificial) fire appeared, surrounded by fruits and flowers. I received the liberating yogic technique before this flaming altar.

"The rites were completed in the early dawn. In my ecstatic state I felt no need for sleep. I wandered about the palace rooms, filled with treasures and exquisite objets d'art, and visited the gardens. I noticed, nearby, the caves and barren mountain ledges that I had seen yesterday; but then they had not adjoined a great building and flowered terraces.

"Reentering the palace, fabulously glistening in the cold Himalayan sunlight, I sought the presence of my master. He was still enthroned, surrounded by many quiet disciples.

"'Lahiri, you are hungry.' Babaji added, 'Close your eyes.'

"When I reopened them, the enchanting palace and its gardens had disappeared. My own body and the forms of Babaji and his disciples were all now seated on the bare ground at the exact site of the vanished palace, not far from the sunlit entrances of the rocky grottos. I recalled that my guide had remarked that the palace would be dematerialized, its captive atoms released into the thought essences from which they had sprung. Although stunned, I looked trustingly at my guru. I knew not what to expect next on this day of miracles.

"'The purpose for which the palace was created has now been served,' Babaji explained. He lifted an earthen vessel from the ground. 'Put your hand there and receive whatever food you desire.'

"I touched the broad, empty bowl; hot buttered *luchis*, curry, and sweetmeats appeared. As I ate them I noticed that the bowl remained ever filled. At the end of the meal I looked around for water. My guru pointed to the bowl before me. The food had vanished; in its place was water.

"'Few mortals know that the kingdom of God includes the kingdom of mundane fulfillments,' Babaji observed. 'The divine realm extends to the earthly; but the latter, illusory in nature, does not contain the essence of Reality.'

"'Beloved Guru, last night you demonstrated for me the link of

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beauty in heaven and earth!' I smiled at memories of the vanished palace; surely no simple yogi had ever received initiation into the august mysteries of Spirit amidst surroundings of more impressive luxury! I gazed tranquilly at the stark contrast of the present scene. The gaunt ground, the skyey roof, the caves offering primitive shelter—all seemed a gracious natural setting for the seraphic saints around me.

"I sat that afternoon on my blanket, hallowed by associations of past-life realizations. My divine guru approached and passed his hand over my head. I entered the *nirbikalpa samadhi* state, remaining unbrokenly in its bliss for seven days. Crossing the successive strata of Self-knowledge, I penetrated the deathless realms of Reality. All delusive limitations dropped away; my soul was fully established on the altar of the Cosmic Spirit.

"On the eighth day I fell at my guru's feet and implored him to keep me always near him in this sacred wilderness.

"'My son,' Babaji said, embracing me, 'your role in this incarnation must be played before the gaze of the multitude. Prenatally blessed by many lives of lonely meditation, you must now mingle in the world of men.

"'A deep purpose underlay the fact that you did not meet me this time until you were already a married man, with modest family and business responsibilities. You must put aside your thoughts of joining our secret band in the Himalayas. Your life lies amid the city crowds, serving as an example of the ideal yogi-householder.

"'The cries of many bewildered worldly men and women have not fallen unheard on the ears of the Great Ones,' he went on. 'You have been chosen to bring spiritual solace through *Kriya Yoga* to numerous earnest seekers. The millions who are encumbered by family ties and heavy worldly duties will take new heart from you, a householder like themselves. You should guide them to understand that the highest yogic attainments are not barred to the family man. Even in the world, the yogi who faithfully discharges his responsibilities, without personal motive or attachment, treads the sure path of enlightenment.

"'No necessity compels you to leave the world, for inwardly you have already sundered its every karmic tie. Not of this world, you

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must yet be in it. Many years still remain during which you should conscientiously fulfill your family, business, civic, and spiritual duties. A sweet new breath of divine hope will penetrate the arid hearts of worldly men. From your balanced life, they will understand that liberation is dependent on inner, rather than outer, renunciations.'

"How remote seemed my family, the office, the world, as I listened to my guru in the high Himalayan solitudes! Yet adamantine truth rang in his words; I submissively agreed to leave this blessed heaven of peace. Babaji instructed me in the ancient rigid rules that govern the transmission of the yogic art from guru to disciple.

"'Bestow the *Kriya* key only on qualified *chelas*,' Babaji said. 'He who vows to sacrifice all in the quest of the Divine is fit to unravel the final mysteries of life through the science of meditation.'

"'Angelic Guru, as you have already favoured mankind by resurrecting the lost *Kriya* art, will you not increase that benefit by relaxing the strict requirements for discipleship?' I gazed beseechingly at Babaji. 'I pray that you permit me to communicate *Kriya* to all sincere seekers, even though at first they may not be able to vow themselves to complete inner renunciation. The tortured men and women of the world, pursued by the threefold suffering,* need special encouragement. They may never attempt the road to freedom if *Kriya* initiation be withheld from them.'

"'Be it so. The divine wish has been expressed through you. Give *Kriya* to all who humbly ask you for help,' the merciful guru replied.†

"After a silence, Babaji added, 'Repeat to each of your disciples

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* Physical, mental, and spiritual suffering; manifested, respectively, in disease, in psychological inadequacies or "complexes," and in soul ignorance.

† At first Mahavatar Babaji gave permission to Lahiri Mahasaya, only, to teach *Kriya Yoga* to others. The Yogavatar then asked that a few of his disciples also be empowered to teach *Kriya*. Babaji consented, and decreed that the teaching of *Kriya* be restricted, in the future, to those who were advanced on the *Kriya* path and upon whom authority had been conferred by Lahiri Mahasaya or by the channels established by the Yogavatar's authorized disciples. Babaji compassionately promised to assume life-after-life responsibility for the spiritual welfare of all faithful and loyal *Kriya Yogis* who have been initiated by duly authorized *Kriya* teachers.

Yogoda Satsanga Society of India and Self-Realization Fellowship *Kriya Yoga* initiates are strictly required to sign a pledge that they will not reveal the *Kriya* technique

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this majestic promise from the Bhagavad Gita:* *Swalpamapyasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat.*' ["Even a little practice of this *dharma* (religious rite or righteous action) will save you from great fear (*mahato bhayat*)"—the colossal sufferings inherent in the repeated cycles of birth and death.]

"As I knelt the next morning at my guru's feet for a farewell blessing, he sensed my deep reluctance to leave him.

"'There is no separation for us, my beloved child.' He touched my shoulder affectionately. 'Wherever you are, whenever you call me, I shall be with you instantly.'

"Consoled by his wondrous promise, and rich with the newly found gold of God-wisdom, I wended my way down the mountain. At the office I was welcomed by my fellow employees, who for ten days had thought me lost in the Himalayan jungles. A letter soon arrived from the head office.

"'Lahiri should return to the Danapur office,' it read. 'His transfer to Ranikhet occurred by error. Another man should have been sent to assume the Ranikhet duties.'

"I smiled, reflecting on the hidden crosscurrents in the events that had led me to this farthermost spot of India.

"Before returning to Danapur,† I spent a few days with a

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to others. In this way the simple but exact *Kriya* technique is protected from changes and distortions by unauthorized teachers, and remains in its original, uncorrupted form.

Although the ancient restrictions of asceticism and renunciation were waived by Babaji in order that the masses might benefit from *Kriya Yoga*, he nevertheless required of Lahiri Mahasaya and all descendants of his spiritual line (the YSS-SRF line of Gurus) that they impose on any who sought initiation a period of preliminary spiritual training, by way of preparation for *Kriya Yoga* practice. The practice of a highly advanced technique such as *Kriya* is incompatible with a desultory spiritual life. *Kriya Yoga* is more than a meditation technique; it is also a way of life, and requires acceptance by the initiate of certain spiritual disciplines and injunctions. Yogoda Satsanga Society of India and Self-Realization Fellowship have faithfully carried out these instructions handed down through Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and Paramahansa Yogananda. The *Hong-Sau* and *Aum* techniques, taught in the YSS-SRF Lessons and by authorized YSS-SRF representatives as a preliminary to *Kriya Yoga*, are an integral part of the *Kriya Yoga* path. These techniques are highly effective in raising the consciousness to Self-realization, and in liberating the soul from bondage. *(Publisher's Note)*

* Chapter II:40.

† A town near Banaras.

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Bengali family in Moradabad. A party of six friends gathered to greet me. As I turned the conversation to spiritual subjects, my host observed gloomily:

"'Oh, in these days India is destitute of saints!'

"'Babu,' I protested warmly, 'of course there are still great masters in this land!'

"In a mood of exalted fervour, I felt impelled to relate my miraculous experiences in the Himalayas. The little company was politely incredulous.

"'Lahiri,' one man said soothingly, 'your mind has been under a strain in those rarefied mountain airs. This is some daydream you have recounted.'

"Burning with the enthusiasm of truth, I spoke without due thought. 'If I call him, my guru will appear right in this house.'

"Interest gleamed in every eye; it was no wonder that the group was eager to behold such a phenomenon. Half reluctantly, I asked for a quiet room and two new woollen blankets.

"'The master will materialize from the ether,' I said. 'Remain silently outside the door; I shall soon call you.'

"I sank into the meditative state, humbly summoning my guru. The darkened room became filled with a dim, soothing glow; the luminous figure of Babaji emerged.

"'Lahiri, do you call me for a trifle?' The master's gaze was stern. 'Truth is for earnest seekers, not for those of idle curiosity. It is easy to believe when one sees; no soul searchings are then necessary. Supersensual truth is deservedly discovered by those who overcome their natural materialistic scepticism.' He added gravely, 'Let me go!'

"I fell entreatingly at his feet. 'Holy Guru, I realise my serious error; I humbly ask pardon. It was to create faith in these spiritually blinded minds that I ventured to call you. Because you have graciously appeared at my prayer, please do not depart without bestowing a blessing on my friends. Unbelievers though they be, at least they were willing to investigate the truth of my strange assertions.'

"'Very well, I will stay a while. I do not wish your word discredited before your friends.' Babaji's face had softened, but he added gently, 'Henceforth, my son, I shall come whenever you need

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me; not always when you call me.'*

"Tense silence reigned in the little group when I opened the door. As if mistrusting their senses, my friends stared at the lustrous figure on the blanket seat.

"'This is mass hypnotism!' One man laughed blatantly. 'No one could possibly have entered this room without our knowledge!'

"Babaji advanced smilingly and motioned to each one to touch the warm, solid flesh of his body. Doubts dispelled, my friends prostrated themselves on the floor in awed repentance.

"'Let *halua* be prepared.' Babaji made this request, I knew, further to assure the group of his physical reality. While the porridge was boiling, the divine guru chatted affably. Great was the metamorphosis of these doubting Thomases into devout St. Pauls. After we had eaten, Babaji blessed each of us in turn. There was a sudden flash; we witnessed the instantaneous dechemicalization of the electronic elements of Babaji's body into a spreading vaporous light. The God-tuned will power of the master had loosened its grasp of the ether atoms held together as his body; forthwith the trillions of tiny lifetronic sparks faded into the infinite reservoir.

"'With my own eyes I have seen the conqueror of death.' Maitra,† one of the group, spoke reverently. His face was transfigured with the joy of his recent awakening. 'The supreme guru played with time and space, as a child plays with bubbles. I have beheld one with the keys of heaven and earth.'

"I soon returned to Danapur," Lahiri Mahasaya had concluded. "Firmly anchored in the Spirit, again I assumed the manifold family and business obligations of a householder."

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* In the path to the Infinite, even illumined masters like Lahiri Mahasaya may suffer from an excess of zeal, and be subject to discipline. In the Bhagavad Gita, we read many passages where the divine guru Krishna gives chastisement to the prince of devotees, Arjuna.

† The man, later known as Maitra Mahasaya, became highly advanced in Self-realization. I met Maitra Mahasaya shortly after my graduation from high school; he visited the *Mahamandal* hermitage in Banaras, while I was a resident there. He told me then of Babaji's materialization before the group in Moradabad. "As a result of the miracle," Maitra Mahasaya explained to me, "I became a lifelong disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya."

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Lahiri Mahasaya also related to Swami Kebalananda and Sri Yukteswar the story of another meeting with Babaji. The occasion was one of many on which the supreme guru fulfilled his promise: "I shall come whenever you need me."

"The scene was a *Kumbha Mela* at Allahabad," Lahiri Mahasaya told his disciples. "I had gone there during a short vacation from my office duties. As I wandered amidst the throng of monks and sadhus that had come from great distances to attend the holy festival, I noticed an ash-smeared ascetic who was holding a begging bowl. The thought arose in my mind that the man was hypocritical, wearing the outward symbols of renunciation without a corresponding inward grace.

"No sooner had I passed the ascetic than my astounded eye fell on Babaji. He was kneeling in front of a matted-haired anchorite.

"'Guruji!' I hastened to his side. 'Sir, what are you doing here?'

"'I am washing the feet of this renunciant, and then I shall clean his cooking utensils.' Babaji smiled at me like a little child; I knew he was intimating that he wanted me to criticize no one, but to see the Lord as residing equally in all body-temples, whether of superior or inferior men.

"The great guru added, 'By serving wise and ignorant sadhus, I am learning the greatest of virtues, pleasing to God above all others—humility.'"*

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* "[He] humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth" — (*Psalms* 113:6, Bible). "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" — (*Matthew* 23:12, Bible).

To humble the ego or false self is to discover one's eternal identity.

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CHAPTER 35

The Christlike Life of Lahiri Mahasaya

"Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."* In these words to John the Baptist, and in asking John to baptize him, Jesus was acknowledging the divine rights of his guru.

From a reverent study of the Bible from an Oriental viewpoint,† and from intuitional perception, I am convinced that John the Baptist was, in past lives, the guru of Christ. Numerous passages in the Bible imply that John and Jesus in their last incarnations were, respectively, Elijah and his disciple Elisha. (These are the spellings in the Old Testament. The Greek translators spelled the names as Elias and Eliseus; they reappear in the New Testament in these changed forms.)

The very end of the Old Testament is a prediction of the reincarnation of Elijah and Elisha: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."‡ Thus John (Elijah), sent "before the coming...of the Lord," was born slightly earlier to serve as a herald for Christ. An

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* *Matthew* 3:15 (Bible).

† Many Biblical passages reveal that the law of reincarnation was understood and accepted by those who wrote the Old and New Testaments.

‡ *Malachi* 4:5 (Bible).

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angel appeared to Zacharias the father to testify that his coming son John would be none other than Elijah (Elias).

"But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.... And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him* *in the spirit and power of Elias*, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."†

Jesus twice unequivocally identified Elijah (Elias) as John: "Elias is come already, and they knew him not.... Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."‡ Again, Christ says: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come."§

When John denied that he was Elias (Elijah),** he meant that in the humble garb of John he came no longer in the outward elevation of Elijah the great guru. In his former incarnation he had given the "mantle" of his glory and his spiritual wealth to his disciple Elisha. "And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee.... And he took the *mantle* of Elijah that fell from him."††

The roles became reversed, because Elijah-John was no longer needed to be the ostensible guru of Elisha-Jesus, now divinely perfected.

When Christ was transfigured on the mountain‡‡ it was his guru Elias, with Moses, that he saw. In his hour of extremity on the Cross, Jesus cried out: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias....Let us see whether Elias will come to save him."§§

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* "Before him," i.e., "before the Lord."

† *Luke* 1:13–17 (Bible).

‡ *Matthew* 17:12–13 (Bible).

§ *Matthew* 11:13–14 (Bible).

** *John* 1:21 (Bible).

†† *II Kings* 2:9–14 (Bible).

‡‡ *Matthew* 17:3 (Bible).

§§ *Matthew* 27:46–49 (Bible).

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The timeless bond of guru and disciple that existed between John and Jesus was present also for Babaji and Lahiri Mahasaya. With tender solicitude the deathless guru swam the abysmal waters that swirled between two lives of his *chela*, and guided the successive steps taken by the child and then by the man Lahiri Mahasaya. It was not until the disciple had reached his thirty-third year that Babaji deemed the time ripe for reestablishing openly the never-severed link.

After the brief meeting near Ranikhet, the selfless guru did not keep the beloved disciple by his side but released Lahiri Mahasaya for an outward world mission. "My son, I shall come whenever you need me." What mortal lover can fulfill the infinite implications of such a promise?

Unknown to society in general, a great spiritual renaissance started in 1861 in a remote corner of Banaras. As the fragrance of flowers cannot be suppressed, so Lahiri Mahasaya, quietly living as an ideal householder, could not hide his innate glory. Devotee-bees from every part of India began to seek the divine nectar of the liberated master.

The English office superintendent was one of the first to notice a strange transcendental change in his employee, whom he affectionately called "Ecstatic Babu."

"Sir, you seem sad. What is the trouble?" Lahiri Mahasaya made this sympathetic inquiry one morning to his employer.

"My wife in England is critically ill. I am torn by anxiety."

"I shall get you some word about her." Lahiri Mahasaya left the room and sat for a short time in a secluded spot. On his return he smiled consolingly.

"Your wife is improving; she is now writing you a letter." The omniscient yogi quoted some parts of the missive.

"Ecstatic Babu, I already know that you are no ordinary man. Yet I am unable to believe that, at will, you can banish time and space!"

The promised letter finally arrived. The astounded superintendent found that it contained not only the good news of his wife's recovery but also the same phrases that, weeks earlier, the great master had uttered.

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The wife came to India some months later. Meeting Lahiri Mahasaya, she gazed at him reverently.

"Sir," she said, "it was your form, haloed in glorious light, that I beheld months ago by my sickbed in London. At that moment I was completely healed! Soon after, I was able to undertake the long ocean voyage to India."

Day after day the sublime guru initiated one or two devotees into *Kriya Yoga*. In addition to these spiritual duties and to the responsibilities of his business and family life, the great master took an enthusiastic interest in education. He organized many study groups and played an active part in the growth of a large high school in the Bengalitola section of Banaras. At weekly meetings, which came to be called his "Gita Assembly," the guru expounded the scriptures to many eager truth seekers.

By these manifold activities, Lahiri Mahasaya sought to answer the common challenge: "After performing one's business and social duties, where is the time for devotional meditation?" The harmoniously balanced life of the great householder-guru became the inspiration of thousands of men and women. Earning only a modest salary, thrifty, unostentatious, accessible to all, the master carried on naturally and happily in the path of disciplined worldly life.

Though ensconced in the seat of the Supreme One, Lahiri Mahasaya showed reverence to all men, irrespective of their differing merits. When his devotees saluted him, he bowed in turn to them. With a childlike humility, the master often touched the feet of others, but seldom allowed them to pay him similar honour, even though such obeisance toward the guru is an ancient Oriental custom.

A significant feature of Lahiri Mahasaya's life was his gift of *Kriya* initiation to those of every faith. Not Hindus only, but Moslems and Christians were among his foremost disciples. Monists and dualists, those of various faiths or of no established faith, were impartially received and instructed by the universal guru. One of his highly advanced *chelas* was Abdul Gufoor Khan, a Moslem. Lahiri Mahasaya, belonging himself to the highest or *Brahmin* caste, made courageous efforts to dissolve the rigid caste bigotry of his time. Those from every walk of life found shelter under the master's omnipresent wings. Like all other God-inspired

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prophets, Lahiri Mahasaya gave new hope to the outcasts and the downtrodden of society.

"Remember that you belong to no one and that no one belongs to you. Reflect that some day you will suddenly have to leave everything in this world—so make the acquaintance of God now," the great guru told his disciples. "Prepare yourself for the coming astral journey of death by riding daily in a balloon of divine perception. Through delusion you are perceiving yourself as a bundle of flesh and bones, which at best is a nest of troubles.* Meditate unceasingly, that you quickly behold yourself as the Infinite Essence, free from every form of misery. Cease being a prisoner of the body; using the secret key of *Kriya*, learn to escape into Spirit."

The master encouraged his various disciples to adhere to the good traditional discipline of their own faiths. Stressing the all-inclusive nature of *Kriya Yoga* as a practical technique of liberation, Lahiri Mahasaya then gave his *chelas* liberty to express their lives in conformance with environment and upbringing.

"A Moslem should perform his *namaj*† worship five times daily," the master pointed out. "Several times daily a Hindu should sit in meditation. A Christian should go down on his knees several times daily, praying to God and then reading the Bible."

With wise discernment the guru guided his followers into the paths of *Bhakti* (devotion), *Karma* (action), *Jnana* (wisdom), or *Raja* (royal or complete) *Yoga*, according to each man's natural tendencies. The master, who was slow to give his permission to devotees wishing to enter the formal path of monkhood, always cautioned them first to reflect well on the austerities of the monastic life.

The great guru taught his disciples to avoid theoretical discussion of the scriptures. "He only is wise who devotes himself to realizing, not reading only, the ancient revelations," he said. "Solve all your problems through meditation.‡ Exchange unprofitable specu-

* "How many sorts of death are in our bodies! Nothing is therein but death." —*Martin Luther.*

† The chief prayer of a Moslem.

‡ "Seek truth in meditation, not in mouldy books. Look in the sky to find the moon, not in the pond." —*Persian proverb.*

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lations for actual God-communion.

"Clear your mind of dogmatic theological debris; let in the fresh, healing waters of direct perception. Attune yourself to the active inner Guidance; the Divine Voice has the answer to every dilemma of life. Though man's ingenuity for getting himself into trouble appears to be endless, the Infinite Succour is no less resourceful."

The master's omnipresence was demonstrated one day before a group of disciples who were listening to his exposition of the Bhagavad Gita. As he was explaining the meaning of *Kutastha Chaitanya* or the Christ Consciousness in all vibratory creation, Lahiri Mahasaya suddenly gasped and cried out:

"I am drowning in the bodies of many souls off the coast of Japan!"

The next morning the *chelas* read a cabled newspaper account of the deaths of a number of persons whose ship had foundered the preceding day near Japan.

Many distant disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya were aware of his enfolding presence. "I am ever with those who practice *Kriya*," he would say consolingly to *chelas* who could not remain near him. "I will guide you to the Cosmic Home through your ever enlarging spiritual perceptions."

Sri Bhupendra Nath Sanyal,* an eminent disciple of the great guru, stated that, as a youth in 1892, unable to go to Banaras, he prayed to the master for spiritual instruction. Lahiri Mahasaya appeared before Bhupendra in a dream and gave him *diksha* (initiation). Later the boy went to Banaras and asked the guru for *diksha*. "I have already initiated you, in a dream," Lahiri Mahasaya replied.

If a disciple neglected any of his worldly obligations, the master would gently correct and discipline him.

"Lahiri Mahasaya's words were mild and healing, even when he was forced to speak openly of a *chela's* faults," Sri Yukteswar once told me. He added ruefully, "No disciple ever fled from our master's barbs." I could not help laughing, but I truthfully assured my guru that, sharp or not, his every word was music to my ears.

* Sri Sanyal died in 1962. *(Publisher's Note)*

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Lahiri Mahasaya carefully graded *Kriya* into four progressive initiations.* He bestowed the three higher techniques only after a devotee had manifested definite spiritual progress. One day a certain *chela*, convinced that his worth was not being duly evaluated, gave voice to his discontent.

"Master," he said, "surely I am ready now for the second initiation." At this moment the door opened to admit a humble disciple, Brinda Bhagat. He was a Banaras postman.

"Brinda, sit by me here." The great guru smiled at him affectionately. "Tell me, are you ready for the second *Kriya*?"

The little postman folded his hands supplicatingly. "Gurudeva," he said in alarm, "no more initiations, please! How can I assimilate any higher teachings? I have come today to ask your blessings, because the first *Kriya* has filled me with such divine intoxication that I cannot deliver the letters!"

"Already Brinda swims in the sea of Spirit." At these words from Lahiri Mahasaya, the other disciple hung his head.

"Master," he said, "I see I have been a poor workman, finding fault with my tools."

The lowly postman, who was uneducated, later developed his insight through *Kriya* to such an extent that scholars occasionally sought his interpretation on involved scriptural points. Innocent alike of sin and syntax, little Brinda won renown in the domain of learned pundits.

Besides the numerous Banaras disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya, hundreds came to him from distant parts of India. He himself travelled to Bengal on several occasions, visiting at the homes of the fathers-in-law of his two sons. Thus blessed by his presence, Bengal became honeycombed with small *Kriya* groups. Particularly in the districts of Krishnanagar and Bishnupur, many silent devotees to this day have kept the invisible current of spiritual meditation flowing.

Among many saints who received *Kriya* from Lahiri Mahasaya may be mentioned the illustrious Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati

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* *Kriya Yoga* has many ramifications; Lahiri Mahasaya discerned the four essential steps—those that possess the highest practical value.

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of Banaras; and the Deoghar ascetic of high stature, Balananda Brahmachari. For a time Lahiri Mahasaya served as private tutor to the son of Maharaja Iswari Narayan Sinha Bahadur of Banaras. Recognizing the master's spiritual attainment, the Maharaja, as well as his son, sought *Kriya* initiation, as did the Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Thakur.

A number of Lahiri Mahasaya's disciples with influential worldly position were desirous of expanding the *Kriya* circle by publicity. The guru refused his permission. One *chela*, the royal physician to the Lord of Banaras, started an organized effort to spread the master's name as "Kashi Baba" (Exalted One of Banaras).* Again the guru forbade it.

"Let the fragrance of the *Kriya* flower be wafted in a natural way," he said. "The seeds of *Kriya* will take sure root in the soil of spiritually fertile hearts."

Although the great master did not adopt the system of preaching through the modern medium of an organization, or through the printing press, he knew that the power of his message would rise like a resistless flood, inundating by its own force the banks of human minds. The changed and purified lives of devotees were the simple guarantees of the deathless vitality of *Kriya*.

In 1886, twenty-five years after his Ranikhet initiation, Lahiri Mahasaya was retired on a pension.† With his availability in the daytime, disciples sought him out in ever increasing numbers. The great guru now sat in silence most of the time, locked in the tranquil lotus posture. He seldom left his little parlour, even for a walk or to visit other parts of the house. A quiet stream of *chelas* arrived, almost ceaselessly, for a *darshan* (holy sight) of the guru.

To the awe of all beholders, Lahiri Mahasaya's habitual physiological state exhibited the superhuman features of breathlessness, sleeplessness, cessation of pulse and heartbeat, calm eyes unblinking

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* Other titles bestowed on Lahiri Mahasaya by his disciples were *Yogibar* (greatest of yogis), *Yogiraj* (king of yogis), and *Munibar* (greatest of saints). I have added *Yogavatar* (incarnation of yoga).

† He had given, altogether, thirty-five years of service in one department of the government.

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for hours, and a profound aura of peace. No visitors departed without upliftment of spirit; all knew they had received the silent blessing of a true man of God.

The master now permitted his disciple, Panchanon Bhattacharya, to open in Calcutta a yoga centre, the "Arya Mission Institution." The centre distributed certain yogic herbal medicines,* and published the first inexpensive editions in Bengal of the Bhagavad Gita. The *Arya Mission Gita*, in Hindi and Bengali, found its way into thousands of homes.

In accordance with ancient custom, the master gave to people in general a *neem*† oil for the cure of various diseases. When the guru requested a disciple to distill the oil, he could easily accomplish the task. If anyone else tried, he would encounter strange difficulties; finding, after putting the oil through the required distilling processes, that the liquid had almost completely evaporated. Evidently the master's blessing was a necessary ingredient.

Lahiri Mahasaya's handwriting and signature, in Bengali script, are shown opposite. The lines occur in a letter to a *chela*; the great master interprets a Sanskrit verse as follows: "He who has attained a state of calmness wherein his eyelids do not blink has achieved *Sambhabi Mudra*."‡
[*signed, lower left*] "Sri Shyama Charan Deva Sharman"

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* Hindu medical treatises are called *Ayurveda*. Vedic physicians used delicate surgical instruments, employed plastic surgery, understood how to counteract the effects of poison gas, performed Caesarean sections and brain operations, were skilled in dynamization of drugs. Hippocrates (4th century B.C.) borrowed much of his *materia medica* from Hindu sources.

† East Indian margosa tree. Its medicinal values are now recognized in the West, where the bitter *neem* bark is used as a tonic, and the oil from seeds and fruit is given for leprosy and other diseases.

‡ *Sambhabi Mudra* means fixing the gaze at the spot between the eyebrows. When the yogi has reached a certain stage of mental peace his eyelids do not blink; he is absorbed in the inner world.

A *mudra* ("symbol") usually refers to a ritual gesture of the fingers and hands. Many *mudras* induce calmness by affecting certain nerves. Ancient Hindu treatises minutely classify the *nadis* (72,000 nerve passages in the body) and their relationships with the mind. The *mudras* employed in worship and in yoga thus have a scientific foundation. An elaborate language of *mudras* is also found in the iconography and the ritual dances of India.

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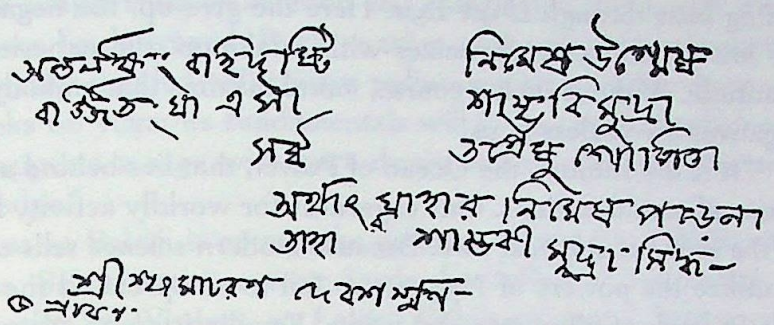

Like many other great prophets, Lahiri Mahasaya himself wrote no books, but instructed various disciples in his interpretations of the scriptures. My dear friend Sri Ananda Mohan Lahiri, a late grandson of the master, wrote the following:

"The Bhagavad Gita and other parts of the *Mahabharata* epic possess several knot-points (*vyas-kutas*). Keep the knot-points unquestioned, and we find only mythical stories of a peculiar and easily misunderstood type. Leave the knot-points unexplained, and we lose a science that India has preserved with superhuman patience after a quest of thousands of years of experiment.*

"Lahiri Mahasaya brought to light, clear of allegories, the science of religion that had been cleverly put out of sight in a riddle of scriptural imagery. No longer an unintelligible jugglery of words, the formulas of Vedic worship have been proved by the master to be full of scientific significance.

"We know that man is usually helpless against evil passions; but these are rendered powerless and man finds no motive for indulging in them when there dawns on him a consciousness of superior and

* "A number of seals recently excavated from archaeological sites of the Indus valley, datable in the third millennium B.C., show figures seated in meditative postures now used in the system of Yoga, and warrant the inference that even at that time some of the rudiments of Yoga were already known. We may not unreasonably draw the conclusion that systematic introspection with the aid of studied methods has been practised in India for five thousand years." — *Professor W. Norman Brown, in "Bulletin of the American Council of Learned Societies," Washington, D.C.*

The testimony of the Hindu scriptures, however, is that the science of Yoga has been known in India for untold millenniums.

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lasting bliss through *Kriya Yoga*. Here the give-up, the negation of the lower nature, synchronizes with a take-up, the experience of beatitude. Without such a course, moral maxims that embody mere negatives are useless to us.

"It is the Infinite, the Ocean of Power, that lies behind all phenomenal manifestations. Our eagerness for worldly activity kills in us the sense of spiritual awe. Because modern science tells us how to utilize the powers of Nature, we fail to comprehend the Great Life in back of all names and forms. Familiarity with Nature has bred contempt for her ultimate secrets; our relation with her is one of practical business. We tease her, so to speak, to discover the ways in which she may be forced to serve our purposes; we make use of her energies, whose Source yet remains unknown. In science our relation with Nature is like that between an arrogant man and his servant; or, in a philosophical sense, Nature is like a captive in the witness box. We cross-examine her, challenge her, and minutely weigh her evidence in human scales that cannot measure her hidden values.

"On the other hand, when the self is in communion with a higher power, Nature automatically obeys, without stress or strain, the will of man. This effortless command over Nature is called 'miraculous' by the uncomprehending materialist.

"The life of Lahiri Mahasaya set an example which changed the erroneous notion that yoga is a mysterious practice. In spite of the matter-of-factness of physical science, every man may find a way through *Kriya Yoga* to understand his proper relation with Nature and to feel spiritual reverence for all phenomena,* whether mystical or of everyday occurrence. We should bear in mind that many things inexplicable a thousand years ago are no longer so, and matters mysterious now may become lawfully intelligible a few years hence.

"The science of *Kriya Yoga* is eternal. It is true like mathematics;

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* "The man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder (and worship), were he president of innumerable Royal Societies and carried . . . the epitome of all laboratories and observatories, with their results, in his single head, is but a pair of spectacles behind which there is no eye." — *Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus."*

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like the simple rules of addition and subtraction, the law of *Kriya* can never be destroyed. Burn to ashes all books on mathematics; the logically minded will always rediscover such truths. Suppress all books on yoga; its fundamentals will be re-revealed whenever there appears a sage with pure devotion and consequently pure knowledge."

Just as Babaji is among the greatest of avatars, a *Mahavatar*, and as Sri Yukteswar may justly be called a *Jnanavatar* or Incarnation of Wisdom, so Lahiri Mahasaya was a *Yogavatar* or Incarnation of Yoga.*

By the standards of both qualitative and quantitative good, the great master elevated the spiritual level of society. In his power to raise his close disciples to Christlike stature and in his wide dissemination of truth among the masses, Lahiri Mahasaya ranks among the saviours of mankind.

His uniqueness as a prophet lies in his practical stress on a definite method, *Kriya*, opening for the first time the doors of yoga freedom to all men. Apart from the miracles of his own life, surely the *Yogavatar* reached the zenith of all wonders in reducing the ancient complexities of yoga to an effective simplicity within the ordinary grasp.

In reference to miracles, Lahiri Mahasaya often said, "The operation of subtle laws that are unknown to people in general should not be publicly discussed or published without due discrimination." If in these pages I have appeared to flout his cautionary words, it is because he has given me an inner reassurance. However, in recording the lives of Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Sri Yukteswar, I have thought it advisable to omit certain miraculous stories. I could hardly have included them without writing, also, an explanatory volume of abstruse philosophy.

As a householder-yogi, Lahiri Mahasaya brought a practical message suited to the needs of today's world. The excellent economic

* Sri Yukteswar had referred to his *chela* Paramahansa Yogananda as an incarnation of divine love. After Paramahansaji's passing, his chief disciple and spiritual successor Rajarsi Janakananda (James J. Lynn) bestowed on him the title of *Premavatar* or Incarnation of Love. *(Publisher's Note)*

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and religious conditions of ancient India no longer obtain. The great master therefore did not encourage the old ideal of a yogi as a wandering ascetic with a begging bowl. He stressed, rather, the advantages to a yogi of earning his own living, of not being dependent on a hard-pressed society for support, and of practising yoga in the privacy of his home. To this counsel Lahiri Mahasaya added the heartening force of his own example. He was a modern, "streamlined" model of a yogi. His way of life, as planned by Babaji, was intended to be a guide for aspiring yogis in all parts of the world.

New hope for new men! "Divine union," the *Yogavatar* proclaimed, "is possible through self-effort, and is not dependent on theological beliefs or on the arbitrary will of a Cosmic Dictator."

Through use of the *Kriya* key, persons who cannot bring themselves to believe in the divinity of any man will behold at last the full divinity of their own selves.

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CHAPTER 36

Babaji's Interest in the West

"Master, did you ever meet Babaji?"

It was a calm summer night in Serampore; the large stars of the tropics gleamed over our heads as I sat by Sri Yukteswar's side on the second-storey balcony of the hermitage.

"Yes." Master smiled at my direct question; his eyes lit with reverence. "Three times I have been blessed by the sight of the deathless guru. Our first meeting was in Allahabad at a *Kumbha Mela*."

The religious fairs held in India from time immemorial are known as *Kumbha Melas*; they have kept spiritual goals in constant sight of the multitude. Devout Hindus gather by millions every twelve years to meet thousands of sadhus, yogis, swamis, and ascetics of all kinds. Many are hermits who never leave their secluded haunts except to attend the *melas** and there bestow blessings on worldly men and women.

"I was not a swami at the time I met Babaji," Sri Yukteswar went on. "But I had already received *Kriya* initiation from Lahiri Mahasaya. He encouraged me to attend the *mela* that was convening in January 1894 in Allahabad. It was my first experience of a *kumbha*; I felt slightly dazed by the clamour and surge of the crowd. I gazed around searchingly, but saw no illumined face of a

* See p. 388 n.

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master. Passing a bridge on the bank of the Ganges, I noticed an acquaintance standing nearby, his begging bowl extended.

"'Oh, this fair is nothing but a chaos of noise and beggars,' I thought in disillusionment. 'I wonder if Western scientists, patiently enlarging the realms of knowledge for the practical good of mankind, are not more pleasing to God than these idlers who profess religion but concentrate on alms.'

"My smouldering reflections on social reform were interrupted by the voice of a tall sannyasi who halted before me.

"'Sir,' he said, 'a saint is calling you.'

"'Who is he?'

"'Come and see for yourself.'

"Hesitantly following this laconic advice, I soon found myself near a tree whose branches were sheltering a guru with an attractive group of disciples. The master, a bright unusual figure, with sparkling dark eyes, rose at my approach and embraced me.

"'Welcome, Swamiji,' he said affectionately.

"'Sir,' I replied emphatically, 'I am *not* a swami.'

"'Those on whom I am divinely directed to bestow the title of *swami* never cast it off.' The saint addressed me simply, but deep conviction of truth rang in his words; I was instantly engulfed in a wave of spiritual blessing. Smiling at my sudden elevation into the ancient monastic order,* I bowed at the feet of the obviously great and angelic being in human form who had thus honoured me.

"Babaji—for it was indeed he—motioned me to a seat near him under the tree. He was strong and young, and looked like Lahiri Mahasaya; yet the resemblance did not strike me, even though I had often heard of the extraordinary similarities in the appearance of the two masters. Babaji possesses a power by which he can prevent any specific thought from arising in a person's mind. Evidently the great guru wished me to be perfectly natural in his presence, not overawed by knowledge of his identity.

"'What do you think of the *Kumbha Mela*?'

* Sri Yukteswar was later formally initiated into the Swami Order by the *Mahant* (monastery head) of Buddh Gaya in Bihar.

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"'I was greatly disappointed, sir,' I said, but added hastily, 'up until the time I met you. Somehow saints and this commotion don't seem to belong together.'

"'Child,' the master said, though apparently I was nearly twice his own age, 'for the faults of the many, judge not the whole. Everything on earth is of mixed character, like a mingling of sand and sugar. Be like the wise ant that seizes only the sugar, and leaves the sand untouched. Though many sadhus here still wander in delusion, yet the *mela* is blessed by a few men of God-realization.'

"In view of my own meeting with this exalted master, I quickly agreed with him.

"'Sir,' I commented, 'I have been thinking of the leading scientific men of the West, greater by far in intelligence than most people congregated here, living in distant Europe and America, professing different creeds, and ignorant of the real values of such *melas* as the present one. They are the men who could benefit greatly by meetings with India's masters. But, although high in intellectual attainments, many Westerners are wedded to rank materialism. Others, famous in science and philosophy, do not recognize the essential unity in religion. Their creeds serve as insurmountable barriers that threaten to separate them from us forever.'

"'I saw that you are interested in the West, as well as in the East.' Babaji's face beamed with approval. 'I felt the pangs of your heart, broad enough for all men. That is why I summoned you here.

"'East and West must establish a golden middle path of activity and spirituality combined,' he continued. 'India has much to learn from the West in material development; in return, India can teach the universal methods by which the West will be able to base its religious beliefs on the unshakable foundations of yogic science.

"'You, Swamiji, have a part to play in the coming harmonious exchange between Orient and Occident. Some years hence I shall send you a disciple whom you can train for yoga dissemination in the West. The vibrations there of many spiritually seeking souls come floodlike to me. I perceive potential saints in America and Europe, waiting to be awakened.'"

At this point in his story, Sri Yukteswar turned his gaze fully on mine.

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"My son," he said, smiling in the bright moonlight, "you are the disciple that, years ago, Babaji promised to send me."

I was happy to learn that Babaji had directed my steps to Sri Yukteswar, yet it was hard for me to visualize myself in the remote West, away from my beloved guru and the simple hermitage peace.

"Babaji then spoke of the Bhagavad Gita," Sri Yukteswar went on. "To my astonishment, he indicated by a few words of praise that he knew I had written interpretations of several Gita chapters.

"'At my request, Swamiji, please undertake another task,' the great master said. 'Will you not write a short book on the underlying harmony between Christian and Hindu scriptures? Their basic unity is now obscured by men's sectarian differences. Show by parallel references that the inspired sons of God have spoken the same truths.'

"'Maharaj,' I answered diffidently, 'what a command! Shall I be able to fulfill it?'

"Babaji laughed softly. 'My son, why do you doubt?' he said reassuringly. 'Indeed, Whose work is all this, and Who is the Doer of all actions? Whatever the Lord has made me say is bound to materialize as truth.'

"I deemed myself empowered by the blessings of the saint, and agreed to write the book. Feeling that the parting hour had arrived, I rose reluctantly from my leafy seat.

"'Do you know Lahiri?' the master inquired. 'He is a great soul, isn't he? Tell him of our meeting.' He then gave me a message for Lahiri Mahasaya.

"After I had bowed humbly in farewell, the saint smiled benignly. 'When your book is finished, I shall pay you a visit,' he promised. 'Good-bye for the present.'

"I left Allahabad the following day and entrained for Banaras. Reaching my guru's home, I poured out the story of the wonderful saint at the *Kumbha Mela*.

"'Oh, didn't you recognize him?' Lahiri Mahasaya's eyes were dancing with laughter. 'I see you couldn't, for he prevented you. He is my incomparable guru, the celestial Babaji!'

"'Babaji!' I repeated, awestruck. 'The Yogi-Christ Babaji! The invisible-visible saviour Babaji! Oh, if I could just recall the past

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and be once more in his presence, to show my devotion at his lotus feet!'

"'Never mind,' Lahiri Mahasaya said consolingly. 'He has promised to see you again.'

"'Gurudeva, the divine master asked me to give you a message. "Tell Lahiri," he said, "that the stored-up power for this life now runs low; it is nearly finished."'

"At my utterance of these enigmatic words, Lahiri Mahasaya's figure trembled as though touched by a lightning current. In an instant everything about him fell silent; his smiling countenance turned incredibly stern. Like a wooden statue, sombre and immovable in its seat, his body became colourless. I was alarmed and bewildered. Never in my life had I seen this joyous soul manifest such awful gravity. The other disciples present stared apprehensively.

"Three hours passed in silence. Then Lahiri Mahasaya resumed his natural, cheerful demeanour, and spoke affectionately to each of the *chelas*. Everyone sighed in relief.

"I realized by my master's reaction that Babaji's message had been an unmistakable signal by which Lahiri Mahasaya understood that his body would soon be untenanted. His awesome silence proved that my guru had instantly controlled his being, cut the last cord of attachment to the material world, and fled to his ever living identity in Spirit. Babaji's remark had been his way of saying: 'I shall be ever with you.'

"Though Babaji and Lahiri Mahasaya were omniscient, and had no need of communicating with each other through me or any other intermediary, the great ones often condescend to play a part in the human drama. Occasionally they transmit their prophecies through messengers in an ordinary way, that later the fulfillment of their words infuse greater divine faith in a wide circle of men who learn the story.

"I soon left Banaras, and set to work in Serampore on the scriptural writings requested by Babaji," Sri Yukteswar continued. "No sooner had I begun my task than I was inspired to compose a poem dedicated to the deathless guru. The melodious lines flowed effortlessly from my pen, though never before had I attempted Sanskrit poetry.

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"In the quiet of night I busied myself over a comparison of the Bible and the scriptures of *Sanatan Dharma*.* Quoting the words of the blessed Lord Jesus, I showed that his teachings are in essence one with the revelations of the Vedas. Through the grace of my *paramguru*,† my book, *The Holy Science*,‡ was finished in a short time.

"The morning after I had concluded my literary efforts," Master continued, "I went to the Rai Ghat here to bathe in the Ganges. The *ghat* was deserted; I stood still for a while, enjoying the sunny peace. After a dip in the sparkling waters, I started for home. The only sound in the silence was that of my Ganges-drenched cloth, swish-swashing with every step. As I passed beyond the site of the large banyan tree near the riverbank, a strong impulse urged me to look back. There, under the shade of the banyan, and surrounded by a few disciples, sat the great Babaji!

"'Greetings, Swamiji!' The beautiful voice of the master rang out to assure me I was not dreaming. 'I see you have successfully completed your book. As I promised, I am here to thank you.'

"With a fast-beating heart, I prostrated myself fully at his feet. 'Paramguruji,' I said imploringly, 'will you and your *chelas* not honour my nearby home with your presence?'

"The supreme guru smilingly declined. 'No, child,' he said, 'we are people who like the shelter of trees; this spot is quite comfortable.'

"'Please tarry a while, Master.' I gazed entreatingly at him. 'I shall be back at once with some special sweetmeats.'§

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* Literally, "eternal religion," the name given to the body of Vedic teachings. *Sanatan Dharma* came to be called *Hinduism* because the Greeks who invaded northwestern India under Alexander the Great designated the people on the banks of the river Indus as *Indoos*, or *Hindus*.

† The word *paramguru* refers to the guru of one's guru. Thus Mahavatar Babaji, the guru of Sri Sri Lahiri Mahasaya, is the *paramguru* of Swami Sri Yukteswar.

Mahavatar Babaji is the supreme guru in the Indian line of masters who assume responsibility for the spiritual welfare of all YSS-SRF members who faithfully practise *Kriya Yoga*.

‡ Now published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India.

§ It is considered disrespectful in India if one does not offer refreshments to the guru.

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"When I returned in a few minutes with a dish of delicacies, the lordly banyan no longer sheltered the celestial troupe. I searched all around the *ghat*, but in my heart I knew that the little band had already fled on etheric wings.

"I was deeply hurt. 'Even if we meet again I would not care to talk with Babaji,' I told myself. 'He was unkind to leave me so suddenly.' This was a wrath of love, of course, and nothing more. A few months later I visited Lahiri Mahasaya in Banaras. As I entered his parlour, my guru smiled in greeting.

"'Welcome, Yukteswar,' he said. 'Did you just meet Babaji at the threshold of my room?'

"'Why, no,' I answered in surprise.

"'Come here.' Lahiri Mahasaya touched me gently on the forehead; at once I beheld, near the door, the form of Babaji, blooming like a perfect lotus.

"I remembered my old hurt, and did not bow. Lahiri Mahasaya looked at me in astonishment.

"The divine guru was gazing at me with fathomless eyes. 'You are annoyed with me.'

"'Sir, why shouldn't I be?' I answered. 'Out of the air you came with your magic group, and into the thin air you vanished.'

"'I told you I would see you, but didn't say how long I would remain.' Babaji laughed softly. 'You were full of excitement. I assure you that I was fairly extinguished in the ether by the gust of your restlessness.'

"I was instantly satisfied by this unflattering explanation. I knelt at his feet; the supreme guru patted me kindly on the shoulder.

"'Child, you must meditate more,' he said. 'Your gaze is not yet faultless—you could not see me hiding behind the sunlight.' With these words in a voice like a celestial flute, Babaji disappeared into the hidden radiance.

"That was one of my last visits to Banaras to see my guru," Sri Yukteswar concluded. "Even as Babaji had foretold at the *Kumbha Mela*, the householder incarnation of Lahiri Mahasaya was drawing to a close. During the summer of 1895 his stalwart body developed a small boil on the back. He protested against lancing; he was working out in his own flesh the evil karma of some of his disciples.

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Finally a few *chelas* became very insistent; the master replied cryptically:

"'The body has to find a cause to go; I will be agreeable to whatever you want to do.'

"A short time later the incomparable guru gave up his body in Banaras. No longer need I seek him out in his little parlour; I find every day of my life blessed by his omnipresent guidance."

Years later, from the lips of Swami Keshabananda,* an advanced disciple, I heard many wonderful details about the passing of Lahiri Mahasaya.

"A few days before my guru relinquished his body," Keshabananda told me, "he materialized himself before me as I sat in my hermitage at Hardwar.

"'Come at once to Banaras.' With these words Lahiri Mahasaya vanished.

"I entrained immediately for Banaras. At my guru's home I found many disciples assembled. For hours that day† the master expounded the Gita; then he addressed us simply.

"'I am going home.'

"Our sobs of anguish broke out like an irresistible torrent.

"'Be comforted; I shall rise again.' After this utterance Lahiri Mahasaya rose from his seat, thrice turned his body around in a circle, assumed the lotus posture while facing the north, and gloriously entered *mahasamadhi*.‡

"Lahiri Mahasaya's beautiful body, so dear to the devotees, was cremated with solemn householder rites at Manikarnika Ghat by the holy Ganges," Keshabananda continued. "The following day, at ten o'clock in the morning, while I was still in Banaras, my room was suffused with a great light. Lo! before me stood the flesh and

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* My visit to Keshabananda's ashram is described on pages 392–95.

† September 26, 1895, is the date on which Lahiri Mahasaya left his body. In a few more days he would have reached his sixty-seventh birthday.

‡ Thrice revolving the body, then facing the north, are parts of a Vedic rite used by masters who know beforehand when the final hour is about to strike for the physical body. The last meditation, during which the master merges himself in the Cosmic *Aum*, is called the *maha*, or great, *samadhi*.

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blood form of Lahiri Mahasaya. It looked exactly like his old body, except that it appeared younger and more radiant. My divine guru spoke to me.

"'Keshabananda,' he said, 'it is I. From the disintegrated atoms of my cremated body, I have resurrected a remodelled form. My householder work in the world is done; but I do not leave the earth entirely. Henceforth I shall spend some time with Babaji in the Himalayas, and with Babaji in the cosmos.'

"With a few words of blessing to me, the transcendent master vanished. Wondrous inspiration filled my heart; I was uplifted in Spirit even as were the disciples of Christ and Kabir* who beheld their living guru after his physical death.

"When I returned to my isolated hermitage in Hardwar," Keshabananda went on, "I carried with me a portion of the sacred ashes of Lahiri Mahasaya. I knew he had escaped the spatiotemporal cage; the bird of omnipresence was freed. Yet it comforted my heart to enshrine his holy ashes."

Another disciple who was blessed by the sight of his resurrected guru was the saintly Panchanon Bhattacharya.† I visited him in his home in Calcutta and listened with delight to the story of his many years with the master. In conclusion, he told me of the

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* Kabir was a great 16th-century saint whose large following included Hindus and Moslems. At the time of Kabir's death the disciples quarrelled over the manner of conducting the funeral ceremonies. The exasperated master rose from his final sleep, and gave his instructions. "Half of my remains should be buried with Moslem rites," he said. "Let the other half be cremated with a Hindu sacrament." He then vanished. When the disciples removed the shroud that had covered his body, nothing was found but a beautiful array of flowers. Half of these were obediently buried, in Maghar, by the Moslems, who revere his shrine to this day. The other half was cremated with Hindu ceremonies in Banaras. A temple, *Kabir Cheura*, was built on the site and attracts immense numbers of pilgrims.

In his youth Kabir was approached by two disciples who wanted minute intellectual guidance along the mystic path. The master responded simply:

"Path presupposes distance;
If He be near, no path needest thou at all.
Verily it maketh me smile
To hear of a fish in water athirst!"

† See p. 325. Panchanon erected a Shiva temple in a 17-acre garden in Deoghar, Bihar, in which is enshrined an oil painting of Lahiri Mahasaya. *(Publisher's Note)*

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most marvellous event in his life.

"Here in Calcutta," Panchanon said, "at ten o'clock of the morning that followed his cremation, Lahiri Mahasaya appeared before me in living glory."

Swami Pranabananda, the "saint with two bodies," also confided to me the details of his own supernal experience. During his visit to my Ranchi school, Pranabananda told me:

"A few days before Lahiri Mahasaya left his body, I received from him a letter that requested me to come at once to Banaras. I was unavoidably delayed, however, and could not leave at once. Just as I was preparing to leave for Banaras, about ten o'clock in the morning, I was suddenly overwhelmed with joy to see in my room the shining figure of my guru.

"'Why hurry to Banaras?' Lahiri Mahasaya said, smiling. 'You shall find me there no longer.'

"As the import of his words dawned on me, I cried out brokenheartedly, believing that I was seeing him only in a vision.

"The master approached me comfortingly. 'Here, touch my flesh,' he said. 'I am living, as always. Do not lament; am I not with you forever?'"

From the lips of these three great disciples, a story of wondrous truth has emerged: At the morning hour of ten, one day after the body of Lahiri Mahasaya had been consigned to the flames, the resurrected master, in a real but transfigured body, appeared before three disciples, each in a different city.

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"*

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* *I Corinthians* 15:54–55 (Bible). "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"—*Acts* 26:8 (Bible).

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CHAPTER 37

I Go to America

"America! Surely these people are Americans!" This was my thought as a panorama of Western faces* passed before my inward view.

Immersed in meditation, I was sitting behind some dusty boxes in the storeroom of the Ranchi school.† A private spot was difficult to find during those busy years with the youngsters!

The vision continued; a vast multitude, gazing at me intently, swept actorlike across the stage of consciousness.

The storeroom door opened; as usual, one of the young lads had discovered my hiding place.

"Come here, Bimal," I cried gaily. "I have news for you: the Lord is calling me to America!"

"To America?" The boy echoed my words in a tone that implied I had said "to the moon."

"Yes! I am going forth to discover America, like Columbus. He thought he had found India; surely there is a karmic link between those two lands!"

Bimal scampered away; soon the whole school was informed by the two-legged newspaper.

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* Many of those faces I have since seen in the West, and instantly recognized.

† In 1995, marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda's going to America, a beautiful Smriti Mandir (commemorative temple) was dedicated on the site of the former storeroom in Ranchi where Paramahansaji's vision occurred. *(Publisher's Note)*

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I summoned the bewildered faculty and gave the school into its charge.

"I know you will keep Lahiri Mahasaya's yoga ideals of education ever to the fore," I said. "I shall write you frequently; God willing, someday I shall be back."

Tears stood in my eyes as I cast a last look at the little boys and the sunny acres of Ranchi. A definite epoch in my life had now closed, I knew; henceforth I would dwell in far lands. I entrained for Calcutta a few hours after my vision. The following day I received an invitation to serve as the delegate from India to an International Congress of Religious Liberals in America. It was to convene that year in Boston, under the auspices of the American Unitarian Association.

My head in a whirl, I sought out Sri Yukteswar in Serampore.

"Guruji, I have just been invited to address a religious congress in America. Shall I go?"

"All doors are open for you," Master replied simply. "It is now or never."

"But sir," I said in dismay, "what do I know about public speaking? Seldom have I given a lecture, and never in English."

"English or no English, your words on yoga shall be heard in the West."

I laughed. "Well, dear Guruji, I hardly think the Americans will learn Bengali! Please bless me with a push over the hurdles of the English language."*

When I broke the news of my plans to Father, he was utterly taken aback. To him America seemed incredibly remote; he feared he might never see me again.

"How can you go?" he asked sternly. "Who will finance you?" As he had affectionately borne the expenses of my education and whole life, he doubtless hoped that his question would bring my project to an embarrassing halt.

"The Lord will surely finance me." As I made this reply, I thought of the similar one I had given long ago to my brother Ananta in Agra. Without very much guile, I added, "Father, perhaps God will put it into your mind to help me."

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* Sri Yukteswar and I ordinarily conversed in Bengali.

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"No, never!" He glanced at me piteously.

I was astounded, therefore, when Father handed me, the following day, a cheque made out for a large amount.

"I give you this money," he said, "not in my role as a father but as a faithful disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya. Go then to that far Western land; spread there the creedless teachings of *Kriya Yoga*."

I was immensely touched at the selfless spirit in which Father had been able quickly to put aside his personal desires. The just realization had come to him during the preceding night that no ordinary desire for foreign travel was motivating my plans.

"Perhaps we shall not meet again in this life." Father, who was sixty-seven at this time, spoke sadly.

An intuitive conviction prompted me to reply, "Surely the Lord will bring us together once more."

As I went about my preparations to leave Master and my native land for the unknown shores of America, I experienced not a little trepidation. I had heard many stories about the "materialistic West"—a land very different from India, steeped in the centuried aura of saints.

"To dare the Western airs," I thought, "an Oriental teacher should be hardy beyond the trials of any Himalayan cold!"

One early morning I began to pray, with an adamant determination to continue, even to die praying, until I heard the voice of God. I wanted His blessing and assurance that I would not lose myself in the fogs of modern utilitarianism. My heart was set to go to America, but even more strongly was it resolved to hear the solace of divine permission.

I prayed and prayed, muffling my sobs. No answer came. At noon I reached a zenith; my head was reeling under the pressure of my agonies. I felt that if I cried once more, increasing the depth of my inner passion, my brain would split.

At that moment there came a knock on the door of my Garpar Road home. Answering the summons, I beheld a young man in the scanty garb of a renunciant. He entered the house.

"He must be Babaji!" I thought, dazed, because the man before me had the features of a young Lahiri Mahasaya. He answered my thought. "Yes, I am Babaji." He spoke melodiously in Hindi. "Our

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Heavenly Father has heard your prayer. He commands me to tell you: Follow the behests of your guru and go to America. Fear not; you shall be protected."

After a vibrant pause, Babaji addressed me again. "You are the one I have chosen to spread the message of *Kriya Yoga* in the West. Long ago I met your guru Yukteswar at a *Kumbha Mela*; I told him then I would send you to him for training."

I was speechless, choked with devotional awe at his presence, and deeply touched to hear from his own lips that he had guided me to Sri Yukteswar. I lay prostrate before the deathless guru. He graciously lifted me up. After telling me many things about my life, he gave me some personal instruction and uttered a few secret prophecies.

"*Kriya Yoga*, the scientific technique of God-realization," he finally said with solemnity, "will ultimately spread in all lands, and aid in harmonizing the nations through man's personal, transcendental perception of the Infinite Father."

With a gaze of majestic power, the master electrified me with a glimpse of his cosmic consciousness.

"If there should rise
Suddenly within the skies
Sunburst of a thousand suns
Flooding earth with beams undeemed-of,
Then might be that Holy One's
Majesty and radiance dreamed of!"*

In a short while Babaji started toward the door, remarking, "Do not try to follow me. You will not be able to do so."

"Please, Babaji, don't go away," I cried repeatedly. "Take me with you!" He replied, "Not now. Some other time."

Overcome by emotion, I disregarded his warning. As I tried to pursue him, I discovered that my feet were firmly rooted to the floor. From the door, Babaji gave me a last affectionate glance. My eyes were fixed on him longingly as he raised his hand by way of benediction and walked away.

After a few minutes my feet were free. I sat down and went into a deep meditation, unceasingly thanking God not only for answering

* Bhagavad Gita XI:12 (Arnold's translation).

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my prayer but for blessing me by a meeting with Babaji. My whole body seemed sanctified through the touch of the ancient, ever-youthful master. Long had it been my burning desire to behold him.

Until now, I have never recounted to anyone this story of my meeting with Babaji. Holding it as the most sacred of my human experiences, I have hidden it in my heart. But the thought occurred to me that readers of this autobiography would be more inclined to believe in the reality of the secluded Babaji with his world interests if I relate that I have seen him with my own eyes. I have helped an artist to draw, for this book, a true picture of the Yogi-Christ of modern India.

The eve of my departure for the United States found me in Sri Yukteswar's holy presence. "Forget you were born among Hindus, and don't adopt all the ways of the Americans. Take the best of both peoples," he said in his calm way of wisdom. "Be your true self, a child of God. Seek and incorporate into your being the best qualities of all your brothers, scattered over the earth in various races."

Then he blessed me: "All those who come to you with faith, seeking God, will be helped. As you look at them, the spiritual current emanating from your eyes will enter their brains and change their material habits, making them more God-conscious." Smilingly, he added, "Your lot to attract sincere souls is very good. Everywhere you go, even in a wilderness, you will find friends."

Both of Sri Yukteswar's blessings have been amply demonstrated. I came alone to America, in which I had not a single friend; but there I found thousands ready to receive the timeless soul teachings.

I left India in August, 1920, on *The City of Sparta*, the first passenger boat sailing for America after the close of the World War. I had been able to book passage only after the removal, in ways fairly miraculous, of many "red-tape" difficulties concerned with the granting of my passport.

During the two-month voyage a fellow passenger found out that I was the Indian delegate to the Boston congress.

"Swami Yogananda," he said, with the first of many quaint pronunciations by which I was later to hear my name spoken by the Americans, "please favour the passengers with a lecture next

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Thursday night. I think we would all benefit by a talk on 'The Battle of Life and How to Fight It.' "

Alas! I had to fight the battle of my own life, I discovered on Wednesday. Desperately trying to organize my ideas into a lecture in English, I finally abandoned all preparations; my thoughts, like a wild colt eyeing a saddle, refused any cooperation with the rules of English grammar. Fully trusting in Master's past assurances, however, I appeared before my Thursday audience in the saloon of the steamer. No eloquence rose to my lips; speechlessly I stood before the assemblage. After an endurance contest lasting ten minutes, the audience realized my predicament and began to laugh.

The situation was not funny to me at the moment; indignantly I sent a silent prayer to Master.

"You *can*! Speak!" His voice sounded instantly within my consciousness.

My thoughts fell at once into a friendly relation with the English language. Forty-five minutes later the audience was still attentive. The talk won me a number of invitations to lecture later before various groups in America.

I never could remember, afterward, a word that I had spoken. By discreet inquiry I learned from a number of passengers: "You gave an inspiring lecture in stirring and correct English." At this delightful news I humbly thanked my guru for his timely help, realizing anew that he was ever with me, setting at naught all barriers of time and space.

Once in a while, during the remainder of the ocean trip, I experienced a few apprehensive twinges about the coming English-lecture ordeal at the Boston congress.

"Lord," I prayed deeply, "please let my sole inspiration be Thyself."

The City of Sparta docked near Boston in late September. On October 6, 1920, I addressed the congress with my maiden speech in America. It was well received; I sighed in relief. The magnanimous secretary of the American Unitarian Association wrote the following comment in a published account* of the congress proceedings:

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* *New Pilgrimages of the Spirit* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1921).

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"Swami Yogananda, delegate from the Brahmacharya Ashram of Ranchi, brought the greetings of his Association to the Congress. In fluent English and with a forceful delivery he gave an address of a philosophical character on 'The Science of Religion,' which has been printed in pamphlet form for a wider distribution. Religion, he maintained, is universal and it is one. We cannot possibly universalize particular customs and conventions; but the common element in religion can be universalized, and we may ask all alike to follow and obey it."

Because of Father's generous cheque, I was able to remain in America after the congress was over. Three happy years were spent in humble circumstances in Boston. I gave public lectures, taught classes, and wrote a book of poems, *Songs of the Soul*, with a preface by Dr. Frederick B. Robinson, president of the College of the City of New York.

Starting a transcontinental tour in 1924, I spoke before thousands in many of the principal cities. In Seattle I embarked for a vacation in beautiful Alaska.

With the help of largehearted students, by the end of 1925 I had established an American headquarters on Mount Washington Estates in Los Angeles, California. The building is the one I had seen years before in my vision at Kashmir. I hastened to send Sri Yukteswar pictures of these distant American activities. He replied with a postcard in Bengali, which I here translate:

11th August, 1926

Child of my heart, O Yogananda!

Seeing the photos of your school and students, what joy comes in my life I cannot express in words. I am melting in joy to see your yoga students of different cities.

Hearing about your methods of chant affirmations, healing vibrations, and divine healing prayers, I cannot refrain from thanking you from my heart.

Seeing the gate, the winding hilly way upward, and the beautiful scenery spread out beneath Mount Washington Estates, I yearn to behold it all with my own eyes.

Everything here is going on well. Through the grace of God, may you ever be in bliss.

SRI YUKTESWAR GIRI

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Years sped by. I lectured in every part of my new land, and addressed hundreds of clubs, colleges, churches, and groups of every denomination. During the decade of 1920–1930 my yoga classes were attended by tens of thousands of Americans. To them all I dedicated a new book of prayers and soul thoughts, *Whispers from Eternity*,* with a preface by the famous singer, Mme. Amelita Galli-Curci.

Sometimes (usually on the first of the month, when bills rolled in for the upkeep of Mount Washington Centre, headquarters of Self-Realization Fellowship) I thought longingly of the simple peace of India. But daily I saw a widening understanding between West and East; my soul rejoiced.

George Washington, the "father of his country," who felt on many occasions that he was being divinely guided, uttered (in his "Farewell Address") the following words of spiritual inspiration for America:

"It will be worthy of a free, an enlightened, and at no distant period a great, nation to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue?"

WALT WHITMAN'S "HYMN TO AMERICA"
(From "Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood")

Thee in thy future,
Thee in thy larger, saner brood of female, male — thee in thy athletes, moral, spiritual; South, North, West, East.
Thee in thy moral wealth and civilization (until which thy proudest material civilization must remain in vain),
Thee in thy all-supplying, all-enclosing worship — thee in no single bible, saviour, merely,
Thy saviours countless, latent within thyself, equal to any, divine as any...
These! these in thee (certain to come) today I prophesy.

* Published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India.

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CHAPTER 38

Luther Burbank—
A Saint Amid the Roses

"The secret of improved plant breeding, apart from scientific knowledge, is love." Luther Burbank uttered this wisdom as I walked beside him in his garden in Santa Rosa, California. We halted near a bed of edible cacti.

"While I was conducting experiments to make 'spineless' cacti," he continued, "I often talked to the plants to create a vibration of love. 'You have nothing to fear,' I would tell them. 'You don't need your defensive thorns. I will protect you.' Gradually the useful plant of the desert emerged in a thornless variety."

I was charmed at this miracle. "Please, dear Luther, give me a few cactus leaves to plant in my garden at Mount Washington."

A workman standing nearby started to strip off some leaves; Burbank prevented him.

"I myself will pluck them for the swami." He handed me three leaves, which later I planted, rejoicing as they grew to huge estate.

The great horticulturist told me that his first notable triumph was the large potato now known by his name. With the indefatigability of genius, he went on to present the world with hundreds of crossed improvements on nature—his new Burbank varieties of tomato, corn, squash, cherries, plums, nectarines, berries, poppies, lilies, roses.

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I focused my camera as Luther led me before the famous walnut tree by which he has proved that natural evolution can be telescopically hastened.

"In only sixteen years," he said, "this walnut tree reached a state of abundant nut production. Unaided Nature would have required twice that time."

Burbank's little adopted daughter came romping with her dog into the garden.

"She is my human plant." Luther waved to her affectionately. "I see humanity now as one vast plant, needing for its highest fulfillments only love, the natural blessings of the great outdoors, and intelligent crossing and selection. In the span of my own lifetime I have observed such wondrous progress in plant evolution that I look forward optimistically to a healthy, happy world as soon as its children are taught the principles of simple and rational living. We must return to nature and nature's God."

"Luther, you would delight in my Ranchi school, with its outdoor classes, and atmosphere of joy and simplicity."

My words touched the chord closest to Burbank's heart—child education. He plied me with questions, interest gleaming from his deep, serene eyes.

"Swamiji," he said finally, "schools like yours are the only hope of a future millennium. I am in revolt against the educational systems of our time, severed from nature and stifling of all individuality. I am with you heart and soul in your practical ideals of education."

As I was taking leave of the gentle sage, he autographed a small volume and presented it to me.*

"Here is my book on *The Training of the Human Plant*,"† he said.

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* Burbank also gave me an autographed picture of himself. I treasure it even as a Hindu merchant once treasured a picture of Lincoln. The Hindu, who was in America during the Civil War years, conceived such an admiration for Lincoln that he was unwilling to return to India until he had obtained a portrait of the Great Emancipator. Planting himself adamantly on Lincoln's doorstep, the merchant refused to leave until the astonished President permitted him to engage the services of Daniel Huntington, the famous New York artist. When the portrait was finished, the Hindu carried it in triumph to Calcutta.

† New York: Century Co., 1922.

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"New types of training are needed—fearless experiments. At times the most daring trials have succeeded in bringing out the best in fruits and flowers. Educational innovations for children should likewise become more numerous, more courageous."

I read his little book that night with intense interest. His eye envisioning a glorious future for the race, he wrote: "The most stubborn living thing in this world, the most difficult to swerve, is a plant once fixed in certain habits. . . . Remember that this plant has preserved its individuality all through the ages; perhaps it is one which can be traced backward through aeons of time in the very rocks themselves, never having varied to any great extent in all these vast periods. Do you suppose, after all these ages of repetition, the plant does not become possessed of a will, if you so choose to call it, of unparalleled tenacity? Indeed, there are plants, like certain of the palms, so persistent that no human power has yet been able to change them. The human will is a weak thing beside the will of a plant. But see how this whole plant's lifelong stubbornness is broken simply by blending a new life with it, making, by crossing, a complete and powerful change in its life. Then when the break comes, fix it by these generations of patient supervision and selection, and the new plant sets out upon its new way never again to return to the old, its tenacious will broken and changed at last.

"When it comes to so sensitive and pliable a thing as the nature of a child, the problem becomes vastly easier."

Magnetically drawn to this great American, I visited him again and again. One morning I arrived at the same time as the postman, who deposited in Burbank's study about a thousand letters. Horticulturists wrote him from all parts of the world.

"Swamiji, your presence is just the excuse I need to get out into the garden," Luther said gaily. He opened a large desk drawer containing hundreds of travel folders.

"See," he said, "this is how I do my travelling. Tied down by my plants and correspondence, I satisfy my desire for foreign lands by a glance now and then at these pictures."

My car was standing before his gate; Luther and I drove along the streets of the little town, its gardens bright with his own varieties of Santa Rosa, Peachblow, and Burbank roses.

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The great scientist had received *Kriya* initiation during one of my earlier visits. "I practice the technique devoutly, Swamiji," he said. After many thoughtful questions to me about various aspects of yoga, Luther remarked slowly:

"The East indeed possesses immense hoards of knowledge that the West has scarcely begun to explore."*

Intimate communion with Nature, who unlocked to him many of her jealously guarded secrets, had given Burbank a boundless spiritual reverence.

"Sometimes I feel very close to the Infinite Power," he confided shyly. His sensitive, beautifully modelled face lit with his memories. "Then I have been able to heal sick persons around me, as well as many ailing plants."

He told me of his mother, a sincere Christian. "Many times since her death," Luther said, "I have been blessed by her appearance in visions; she has spoken to me."

We drove back reluctantly toward his home and those waiting thousand letters.

"Luther," I remarked, "next month I am starting a magazine to present the truth-offerings of East and West. Please help me decide on a good name for the journal."

We discussed titles for a while, and finally agreed on *East-West*.† After we had re-entered his study, Burbank gave me an article he had written on "Science and Civilization."

"This will go in the first issue of *East-West*," I said gratefully.

As our friendship grew deeper, I called Burbank my "American saint." "Behold a man," I paraphrased, "in whom is no guile."‡ His heart was fathomlessly deep, long acquainted with humility,

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* Dr. Julian Huxley, famous English biologist and director of UNESCO, recently stated that Western scientists should "learn the Oriental techniques" for entering the trance state and for control of breathing. "*What* happens? *How* is it possible?" he said. An *Associated Press* dispatch from London, dated Aug. 21, 1948, reported: "Dr. Huxley told the new World Federation for Mental Health it might well look into the mystic lore of the East. If this lore could be investigated scientifically, he advised mental specialists, 'then I think an immense step forward could be made in your field.' "

† Renamed *Self-Realization* in 1948.

‡ *John* 1:47 (Bible).

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LUTHER BURBANK

SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA

U. S. A.

December 22, 1924

I have examined the Yogoda system of Swami Yogananda and in my opinion it is ideal for training and harmonizing man's physical, mental, and spiritual natures. Swami's aim is to establish "How-to-Live" schools throughout the world, wherein education will not confine itself to intellectual development alone, but also training of the body, will, and feelings.

Through the Yogoda system of physical, mental, and spiritual unfoldment by simple and scientific methods of concentration and meditation, most of the complex problems of life may be solved, and peace and good-will come upon earth. The Swami's idea of right education is plain commonsense, free from all mysticism and non-practicality; otherwise it would not have my approval.

I am glad to have this opportunity of heartily joining with the Swami in his appeal for international schools on the art of living which, if established, will come as near to bringing the millennium as anything with which I am acquainted.

Luther Burbank

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patience, sacrifice. His little home amid the roses was austerely simple; he knew the worthlessness of luxury, the joy of few possessions. The modesty with which he wore his scientific fame repeatedly reminded me of the trees that bend low with the burden of ripening fruits; it is the barren tree that lifts its head high in an empty boast.

I was in New York when, in 1926, my dear friend passed away. In tears I thought, "Oh, I would gladly walk all the way from here to Santa Rosa for one more glimpse of him!" Locking myself away from secretaries and visitors, I spent the next twenty-four hours in seclusion.

The following day I conducted a Vedic memorial rite before a large picture of Luther. A group of my American students, garbed in Hindu ceremonial clothes, chanted the ancient hymns as an offering was made of flowers, water, and fire—symbols of the bodily elements and their return to the Infinite Source.

Though the form of Burbank lies in Santa Rosa under a Lebanon cedar that he planted years ago in his garden, his soul is enshrined for me in every wide-eyed flower that blooms by the wayside. Withdrawn for a time into the spacious spirit of nature, is that not Luther whispering in her winds, walking her dawns?

His name has now passed into the heritage of common speech. Listing "burbank" as a transitive verb, Webster's New International Dictionary defines it: "To cross or graft (a plant). Hence, figuratively, to improve (anything, as a process or institution) by selecting good features and rejecting bad, or by adding good features."

"Beloved Burbank," I cried after reading the definition, "your very name is now a synonym for goodness!"

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CHAPTER 39

Therese Neumann, the Catholic Stigmatist

"Return to India. I have waited for you patiently for fifteen years. Soon I shall swim out of the body and on to the Shining Abode. Yogananda, come!"

Sri Yukteswar's voice sounded startlingly in my inner ear as I sat in meditation at my Mt. Washington headquarters. Traversing ten thousand miles in the twinkling of an eye, his message penetrated my being like a flash of lightning.

Fifteen years! Yes, I realized, now it is 1935; I have spent fifteen years in spreading my guru's teachings in America. Now he recalls me.

A short time later I described my experience to a dear friend, Mr. James J. Lynn. His spiritual development by daily practice of *Kriya Yoga* has been so remarkable that I often call him "Saint Lynn." In him and in a number of other Occidentals I happily see a fulfillment of Babaji's prophecy that the West, too, would produce saints of true Self-realization through the ancient yogic path.

Mr. Lynn generously insisted on making a donation for my travels. The financial problem thus solved, I made arrangements to sail, via Europe, for India. In March 1935, I had Self-Realization Fellowship chartered under the laws of the State of California as a

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nonsectarian nonprofit corporation, designed to exist perpetually. To Self-Realization Fellowship I donated all my possessions, including the rights in all my writings. Like most other religious and educational institutions, Self-Realization Fellowship is supported by endowments and donations from its members and the public.

"I shall be back," I told my students. "Never shall I forget America."

At a farewell banquet given to me in Los Angeles by loving friends, I looked long at their faces and thought gratefully, "Lord, he who remembers Thee as the Sole Giver will never lack the sweetness of friendship among mortals."

I sailed from New York on June 9, 1935, on the *Europa*. Two students accompanied me: my secretary, Mr. C. Richard Wright, and an elderly lady from Cincinnati, Miss Ettie Bletsch. We enjoyed the days of ocean peace, a welcome contrast to the past hurried weeks. Our period of leisure was short-lived; the speed of modern boats has some regrettable features!

Like any other group of inquisitive tourists, we walked about the huge and ancient city of London. On the day following my arrival I was invited to address a large meeting in Caxton Hall, at which I was introduced to the London audience by Sir Francis Younghusband.

Our party spent a pleasant day as guests of Sir Harry Lauder at his estate in Scotland. A few days later our little group crossed the English Channel to the continent, for I wanted to make a pilgrimage to Bavaria. This would be my only chance, I felt, to visit the great Catholic mystic, Therese Neumann of Konnersreuth.

Years earlier I had read an amazing account of Therese. Information given in the article was as follows:

(1) Therese, born on Good Friday in 1898, was injured in an accident at the age of twenty; she became blind and paralyzed.

(2) She miraculously regained her sight in 1923 through prayers to St. Thérèse of Lisieux, "The Little Flower." Later Therese Neumann's limbs were instantaneously healed.

(3) From 1923 onward, Therese has abstained completely from food and drink, except for the daily swallowing of one small consecrated wafer.

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(4) The stigmata, sacred wounds of Christ, appeared in 1926 on Therese's head, breast, hands, and feet. Every Friday* she experiences the Passion of Christ, suffering in her own body all his historic agonies.

(5) Knowing ordinarily only the simple German of her village, during her Friday trances Therese utters phrases which scholars have identified as ancient Aramaic. At appropriate times in her vision, she speaks Hebrew or Greek.

(6) By ecclesiastical permission, Therese has several times been under close scientific observation. Dr. Fritz Gerlich, editor of a Protestant German newspaper, went to Konnersreuth to "expose the Catholic fraud," but ended up by reverently writing her biography.

As always, whether in East or West, I was eager to meet a saint. I rejoiced as our little party entered, on July 16, the quaint village of Konnersreuth. The Bavarian peasants exhibited lively interest in our Ford automobile (brought with us from America) and its assorted group—an American young man, an elderly lady, and an olive-hued Oriental with long hair tucked under his coat collar.

Therese's little cottage, clean and neat, with geraniums blooming by a primitive well, was alas! silently closed. The neighbours, and even the village postman who passed by, could give us no information. Rain began to fall; my companions suggested that we leave.

"No," I said stubbornly, "I will stay here until I find some clue leading to Therese."

Two hours later we were still sitting in our car amidst the dismal rain. "Lord," I sighed complainingly, "why didst Thou lead me here if she has disappeared?"

An English-speaking man halted beside us, politely offering his aid.

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* Since the war years, Therese has not experienced the Passion every Friday but only on certain holy days of the year. Books on her life are *Therese Neumann: A Stigmatist of Our Day*, and *Further Chronicles of Therese Neumann*, both by Friedrich Ritter von Lama; and *The Story of Therese Neumann*, by A. P. Schimberg (1947); all published by Bruce Pub. Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and *Therese Neumann*, by Johannes Steiner, published by Alba House, Staten Island, New York, U.S.A.

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"I don't know for certain where Therese is," he said, "but she often visits at the home of Professor Franz Wutz, a teacher of foreign languages at the University of Eichstätt, eighty miles from here."

The following morning our party motored to the quiet town of Eichstätt. Dr. Wutz greeted us cordially at his home; "Yes, Therese is here." He sent her word of the visitors. A messenger soon appeared with her reply:

"Though the bishop has asked me to see no one without his permission, I will receive the man of God from India."

Deeply touched at these words, I followed Dr. Wutz upstairs to the sitting room. Therese entered immediately, radiating an aura of peace and joy. She wore a black gown and spotless white headdress. Although her age was thirty-seven at this time, she seemed much younger; possessing indeed a childlike freshness and charm. Healthy, well-formed, rosy-cheeked, and cheerful, this is the saint who does not eat!

Therese greeted me with a very gentle handshaking. We beamed in silent communion, each knowing the other to be a lover of God.

Dr. Wutz kindly offered to serve as interpreter. As we seated ourselves, I noticed that Therese was glancing at me with naive curiosity; evidently Hindus had been rare in Bavaria.

"Don't you eat anything?" I wanted to hear the answer from her own lips.

"No, except a Host* at six o'clock each morning."

"How large is the Host?"

"It is paper-thin, the size of a small coin." She added, "I take it for sacramental reasons; if it is unconsecrated, I am unable to swallow it."

"Certainly you could not have lived on that, for twelve whole years?"

"I live by God's light."

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* A Eucharistic flour-wafer.

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How simple her reply, how Einsteinian!

"I see you realize that energy flows to your body from the ether, sun, and air."

A swift smile broke over her face. "I am so happy to know you understand how I live."

"Your sacred life is a daily demonstration of the truth uttered by Christ: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' "*

Again she showed joy at my explanation. "It is indeed so. One of the reasons I am here on earth today is to prove that man can live by God's invisible light, and not by food only."

"Can you teach others how to live without food?"

She appeared a trifle shocked. "I cannot do that; God does not wish it."

As my gaze fell on her strong, graceful hands, Therese showed me a square, freshly healed wound on the back of each hand. On the palm of each hand, she pointed out a smaller, crescent-shaped wound, freshly healed. Each wound went straight through the hand. The sight brought to me a distinct recollection of the large square iron nails with crescent-tipped ends that are still used in the East but that I do not recall having seen in the West.

The saint told me something of her weekly trances. "As a helpless onlooker, I observe the whole Passion of Christ." Each week, from Thursday midnight until Friday afternoon at one o'clock, her

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* *Matthew* 4:4 (Bible). Man's body battery is not sustained by gross food (bread) alone, but by the vibratory cosmic energy (Word, or *Aum*). The invisible power flows into the human body through the gate of the medulla oblongata. This sixth bodily centre is located at the back of the neck at the top of the five spinal *chakras* (Sanskrit for "wheels" or centres of radiating life force).

The medulla, the principal entrance for the body's supply of universal life energy (*Aum*), is directly connected by polarity with the Christ Consciousness centre (*Kutastha*) in the single eye between the eyebrows: the seat of man's power of will. Cosmic energy is then stored up in the seventh centre, in the brain, as a reservoir of infinite potentialities (mentioned in the Vedas as the "thousand-petalled lotus of light"). The Bible refers to *Aum* as the Holy Ghost or invisible life force that divinely upholds all creation. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"—*I Corinthians* 6:19 (Bible).

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wounds open and bleed; she loses ten pounds of her ordinary 121-pound weight. Suffering intensely in her sympathetic love, Therese yet looks forward joyously to these weekly visions of her Lord.

I realized at once that her strange life is intended by God to reassure all Christians of the historical authenticity of Jesus' life and crucifixion as recorded in the New Testament, and to display dramatically the ever living bond between the Galilean Master and his devotees.

Professor Wutz related some of his experiences with the saint.

"A group of us, including Therese, often travel for days on sight-seeing trips in Germany," he told me. "It is a striking contrast—Therese eats nothing; the rest of us have three meals a day. She remains as fresh as a rose, untouched by fatigue. Whenever the rest of us get hungry and look for wayside inns, Therese laughs merrily."

The professor added some interesting physiological details: "Because Therese takes no food, her stomach has shrunk. She has no excretions, but her perspiration glands function; her skin is always soft and firm."

At the time of parting, I expressed to Therese my desire to be present at her trance.

"Yes, please come to Konnersreuth next Friday," she said graciously. "The bishop will give you a permit. I am very happy you sought me out in Eichstätt."

Therese shook hands gently, many times, and walked with our party to the gate. Mr. Wright turned on the automobile radio; the saint examined it with little enthusiastic chuckles. Such a large crowd of youngsters gathered that Therese retreated into the house. We saw her at a window, where she peered at us, childlike, waving her hand.

From a conversation the next day with two of Therese's brothers, very kind and amiable, we learned that the saint sleeps only one or two hours at night. In spite of the many wounds in her body, she is active and full of energy. She loves birds, looks after an aquarium of fish, and works often in her garden. Her correspondence is large; Catholic devotees write her for prayers and healing blessings. Many seekers have been cured through her of serious diseases.

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Paramahansa Yogananda places flowers at George Washington's crypt, Mt. Vernon, Virginia, February 22, 1927

PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Paramahansa Yogananda and Mr. John Balfour leaving the White House after a call on President Calvin Coolidge, who is looking out of the window.

The Washington Herald, January 25, 1927, reported: "Swami Yogananda was...greeted with evident pleasure by Mr. Coolidge, who told him he had been reading a great deal about him. This is the first time in the history of India that a Swami has been received officially by the President."

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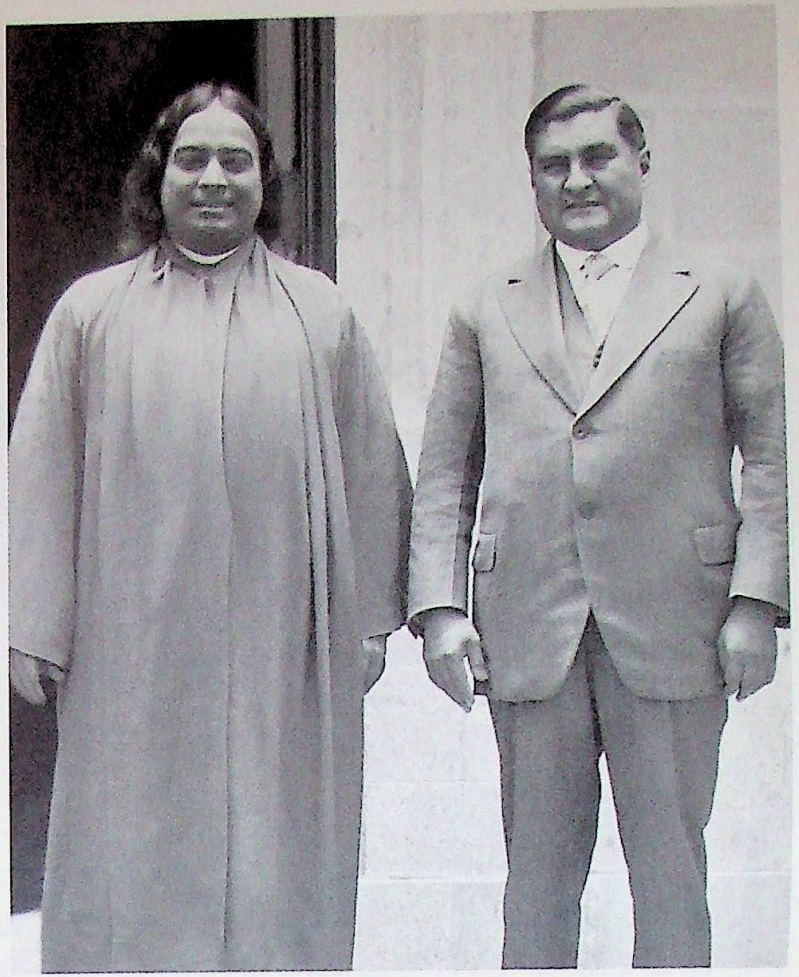
Paramahansaji meditating in a boat on lake Xochimilco, Mexico, 1929.



His Excellency Emilio Portes Gil, president of Mexico, was host to Sri Yogananda when he visited Mexico City, 1929.

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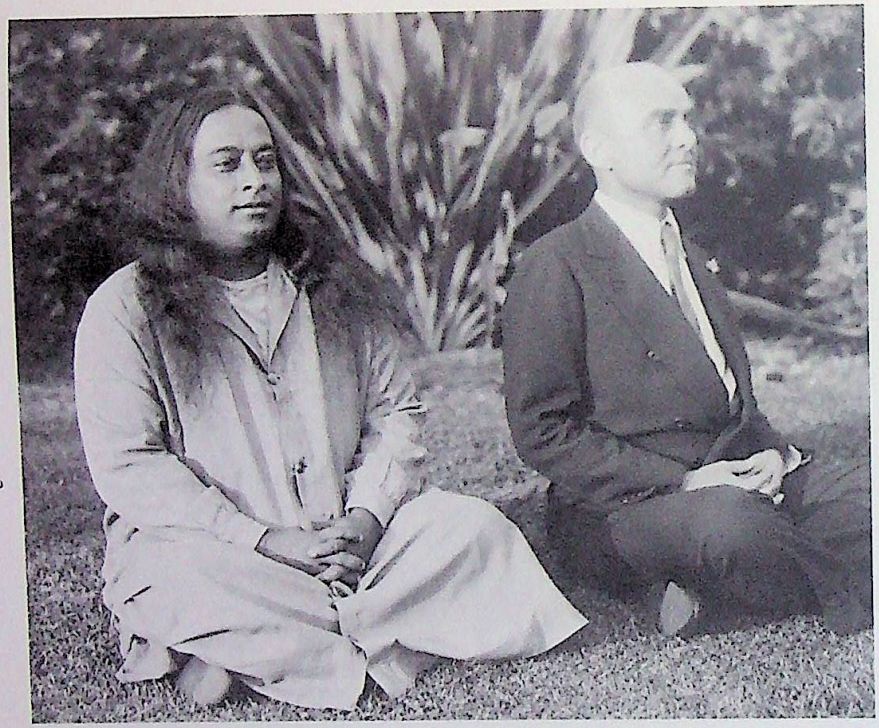
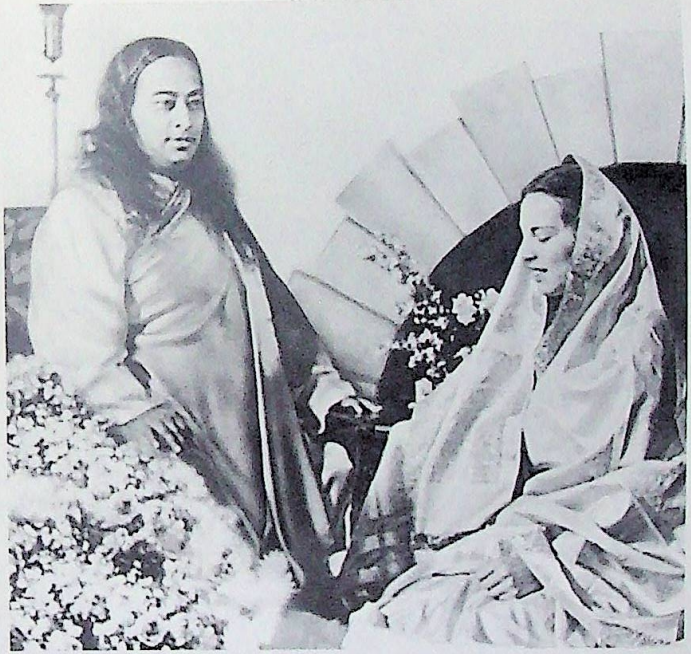


Paramahansa Yogananda and James J. Lynn, later Sri Rajarsi Janakananda. Guru and disciple are meditating at SRF-YSS International Headquarters, Los Angeles, 1933. "Some people say, 'The Westerner cannot meditate.' That is not true," Yoganandaji said. "Since Mr. Lynn first received *Kriya Yoga,* I have never seen him when he was not inwardly communing with God."



Paramahansaji and Faye Wright, now Sri Daya Mata (see Photo Section III, page 4) at SRF Encinitas Hermitage, 1939. Soon after she entered the SRF Ashram in 1931, the Guru told her: "You are my nest egg. When you came, I knew many other true devotees of God would be drawn to this path." He once lovingly remarked, "My Faye, so much good she will do!... I know I can work through her because she is receptive."

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SWAMI SRI YUKTESWAR GIRI AND
SRI YOGANANDAJI, CALCUTTA, 1935

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Swami Sri Yukteswar and Paramahansa Yogananda in religious procession, Calcutta, 1935

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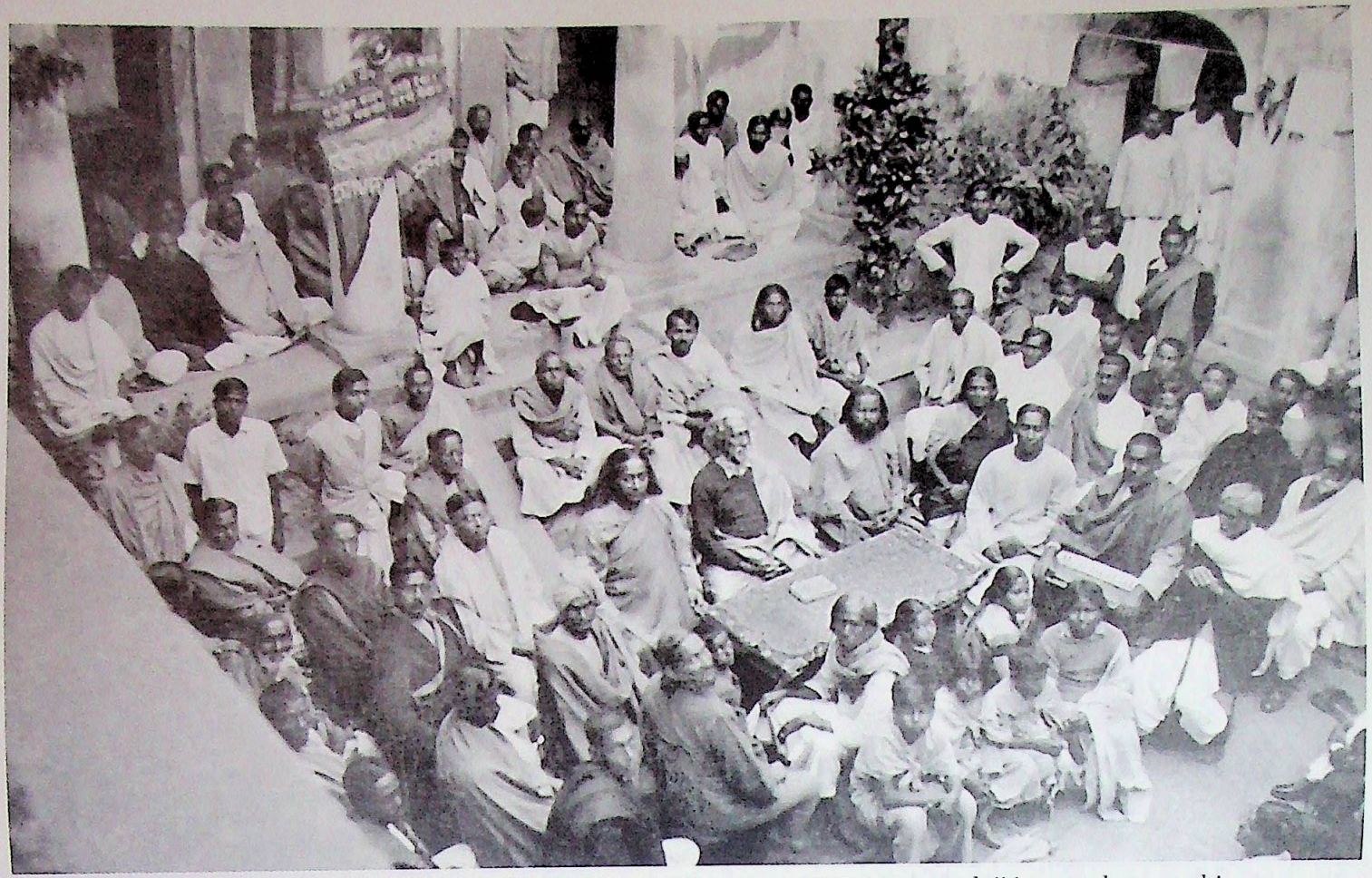

Last Solstice Festival celebrated by Swami Sri Yukteswar, December 1935. Yoganandaji is seated next to his great guru *(centre)* at the table in the courtyard of the ashram in Serampore.

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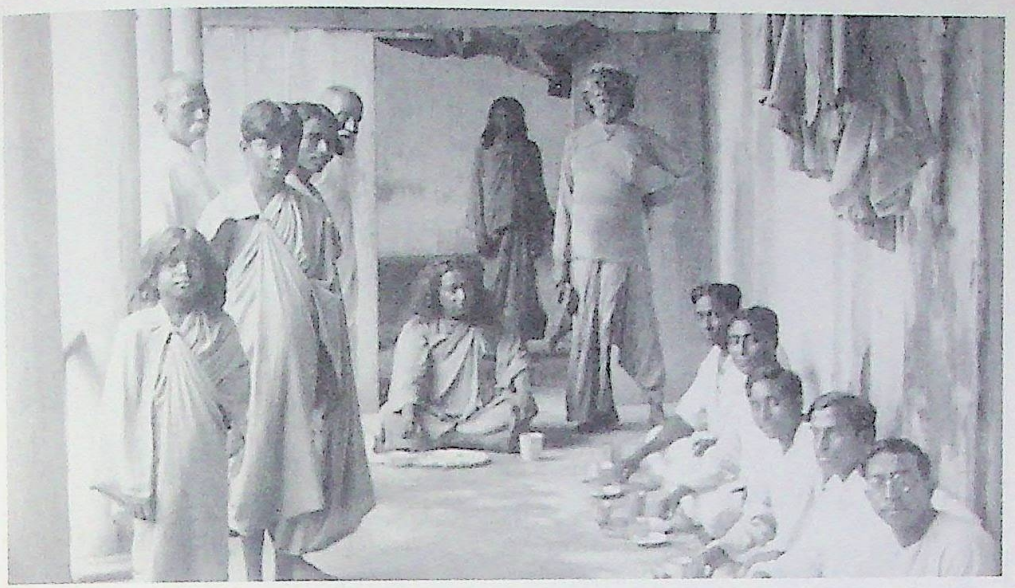

Yogananda ji *(seated centre)* with Sri Yukteswarji *(standing right)*, Serampore Ashram, 1935.

Swami Sri Yukteswar Meditation Temple, dedicated in 1977, on site of his ashram in Serampore. Several bricks from the original ashram were used in its construction. The temple architecture is patterned after a design by Paramahansa Yogananda.

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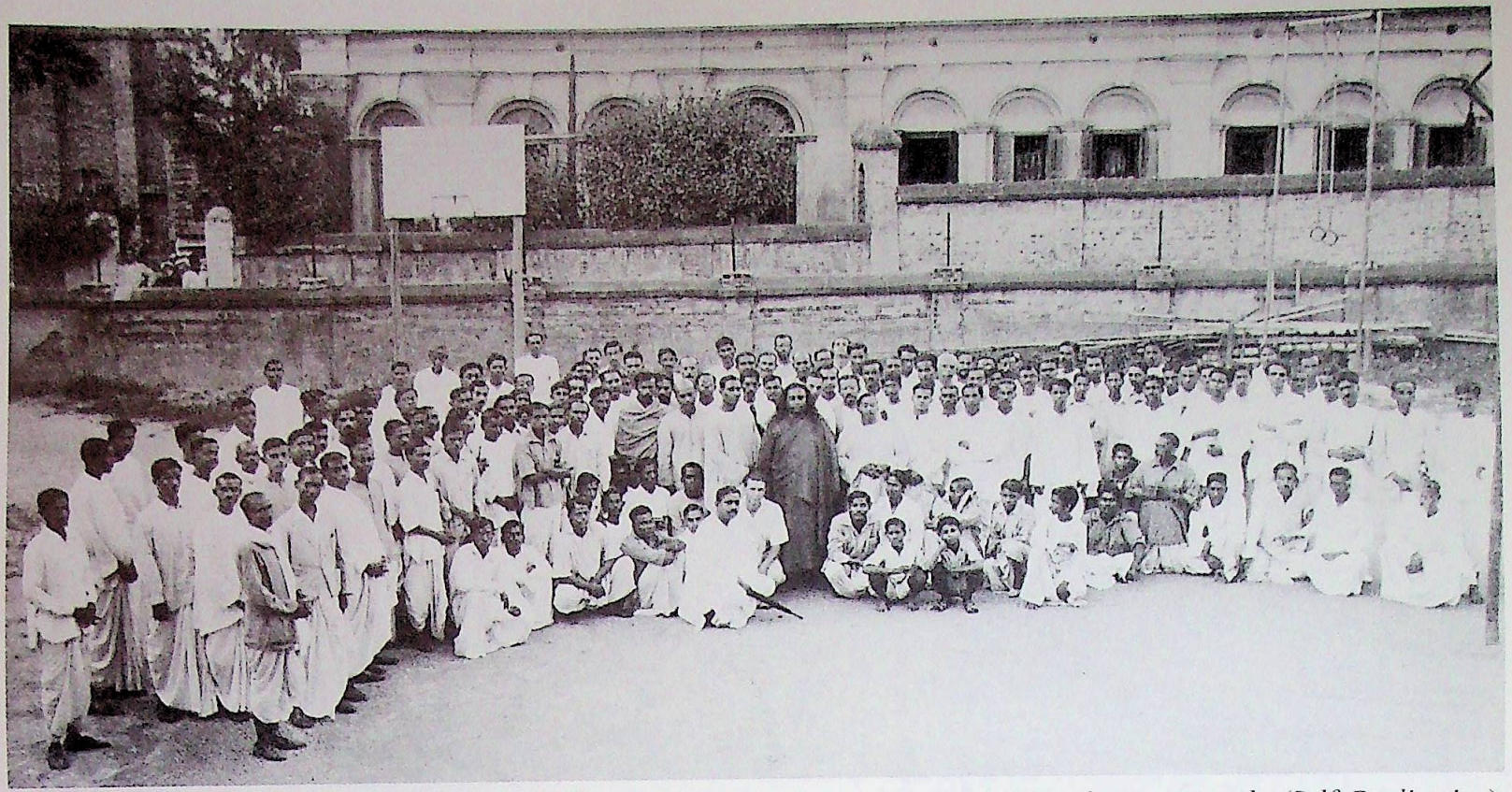

Sri Yogananda (*centre, dark robe*) with some of the *Kriya Yoga* students who attended his class on Yogoda (Self-Realization) teachings at his father's home in Calcutta, 1935. Because of the large attendance, the class met in the adjacent open-air gymnasium of Yoganandaji's younger brother, Bishnu Ghosh, a renowned physical culturist.

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MAHATMA GANDHI'S ASHRAM IN WARDHA

Yoganandaji is reading a note that Gandhiji (*right*) had just written (it was a Monday, Mahatmaji's day for observing silence). On the following day, August 27, 1935, Yoganandaji initiated Gandhiji in *Kriya Yoga*.

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Yoganandaji with Sri Sri Ananda Moyi Ma and her husband Bholanath, Calcutta, 1935

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PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

Photograph taken on December 13, 1935, at Damodar, India, during a visit to the site of his first school for boys, founded in nearby Dihika in 1917. He is meditating in the doorway of a crumbling tower that had once been a favourite nook for seclusion.

Sri Yogananda with teachers and students of Yogoda Satsanga Society school for boys, Ranchi, 1936. The school, founded by Yoganandaji, was moved to this site from Dihika, Bengal, in 1918, under the patronage of the Maharaja of Kasimbazar.

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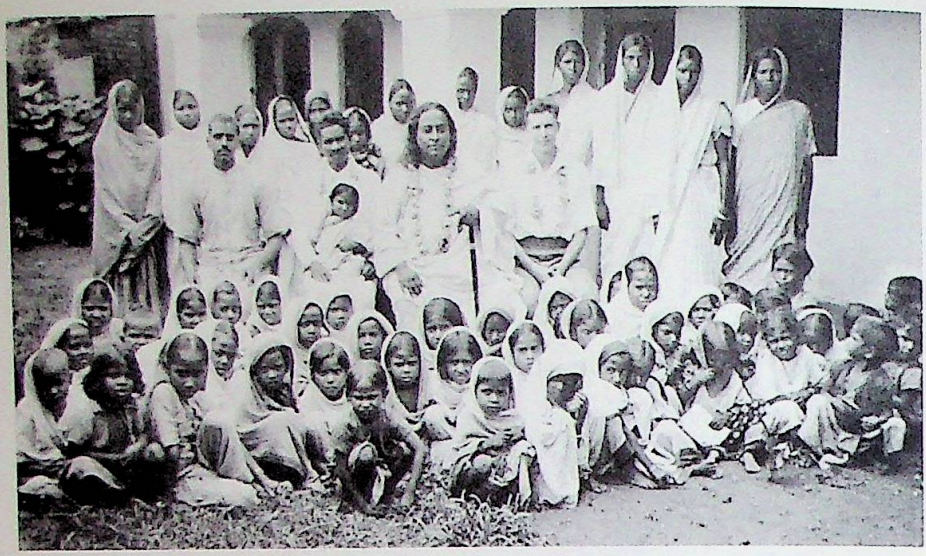

Sri Yogananda (*centre*) and his secretary, C. Richard Wright (*right, seated*), in Ranchi, July 17, 1936. They are surrounded by teachers and students of Sri Yogananda's School for Aborigine Girls.

Sri Yogananda on a boat trip down the Yamuna River, 1935, at Mathura, a holy city associated with the birth and childhood of Bhagavan Krishna. (*Seated, centre to right*) Daughter of Ananta Lal Ghosh (elder brother of Sri Yogananda); Sananda Lal Ghosh (Yoganandaji's younger brother); and C. Richard Wright.

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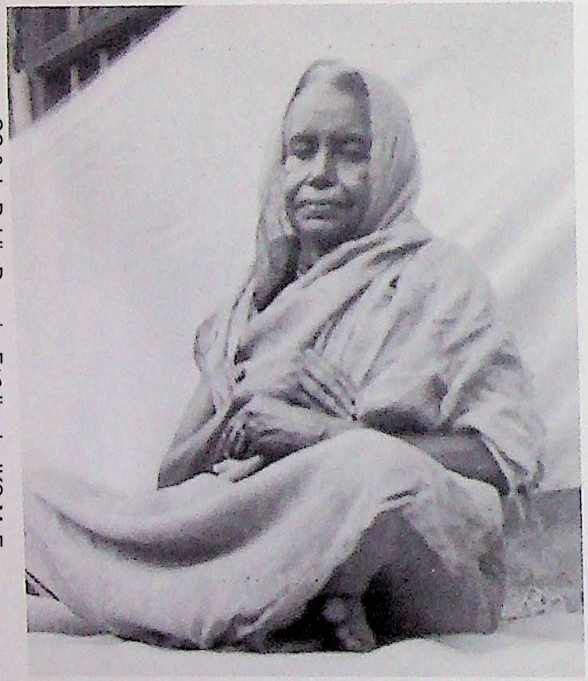
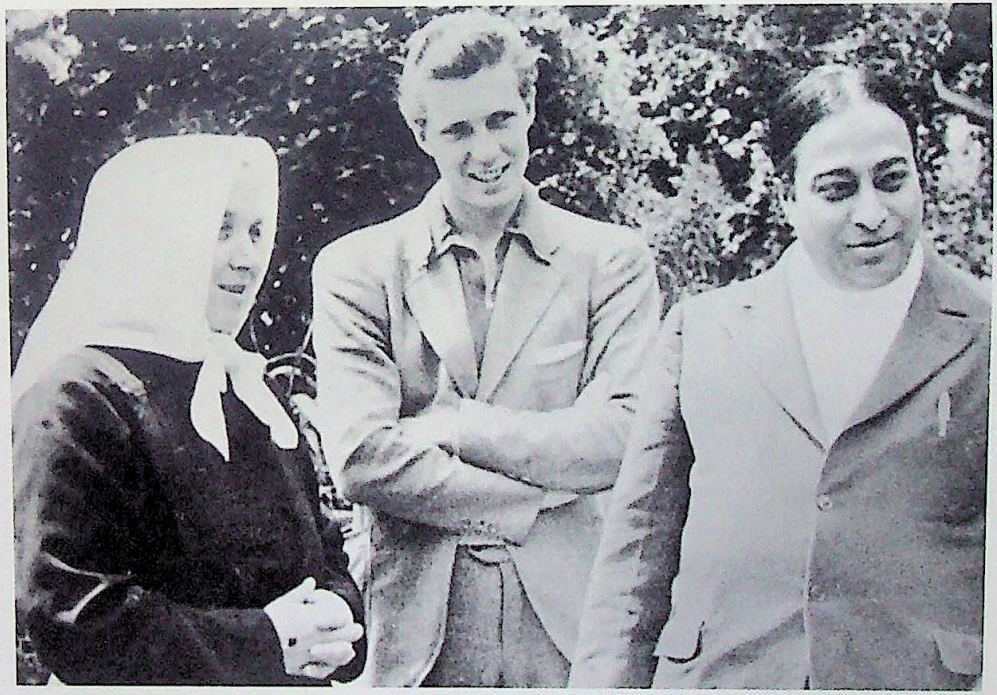


Giri Bala, non-eating saint



Therese Neumann, C. Richard Wright, and Paramahansa Yogananda, Eichstätt, Bavaria, 1935

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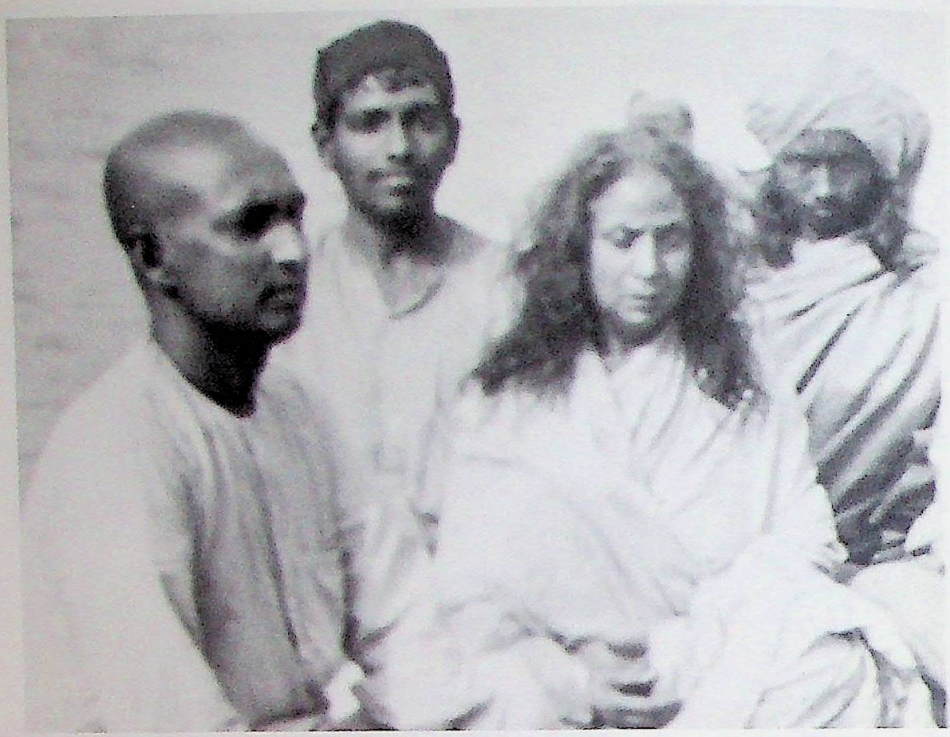
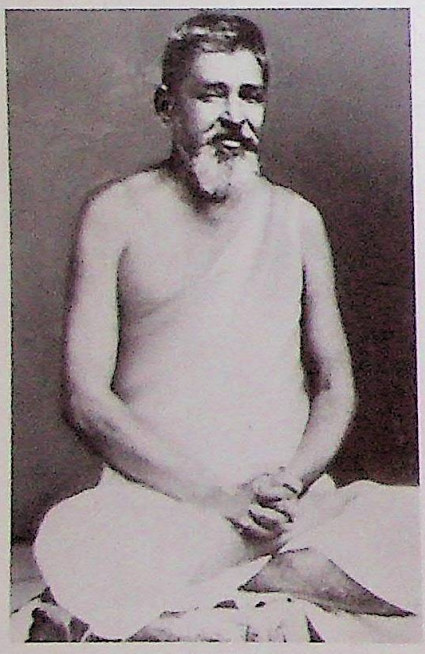


Shankari Mai Jiew, the only living disciple of Trailanga Swami, at *Kumbha Mela* in Hardwar, 1938. The *yogini* was then 112 years old (see page 285)



PANCHANON BHATTACHARYA
Disciple of Sri Sri Lahiri Mahasaya

Swami Krishnananda, at the 1936 *Kumbha Mela* in Allahabad, with his tame vegetarian lioness that utters *Aum* in a deep, attractive growl (see page 390).

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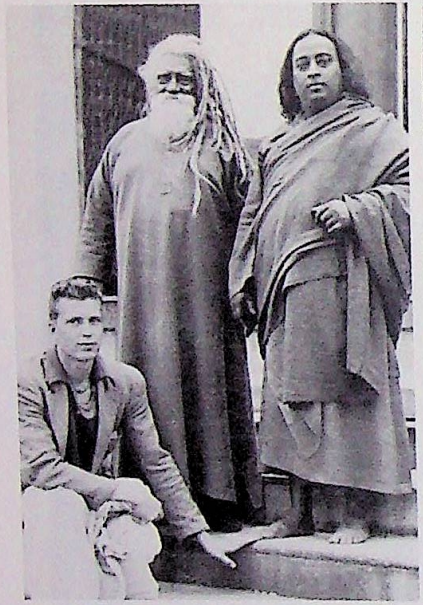
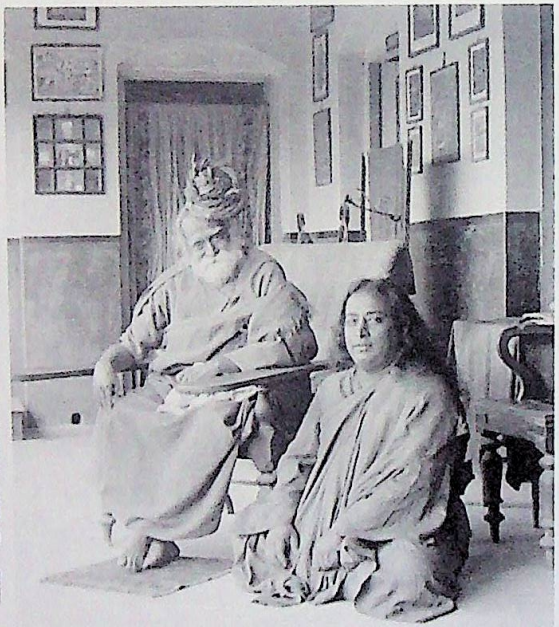
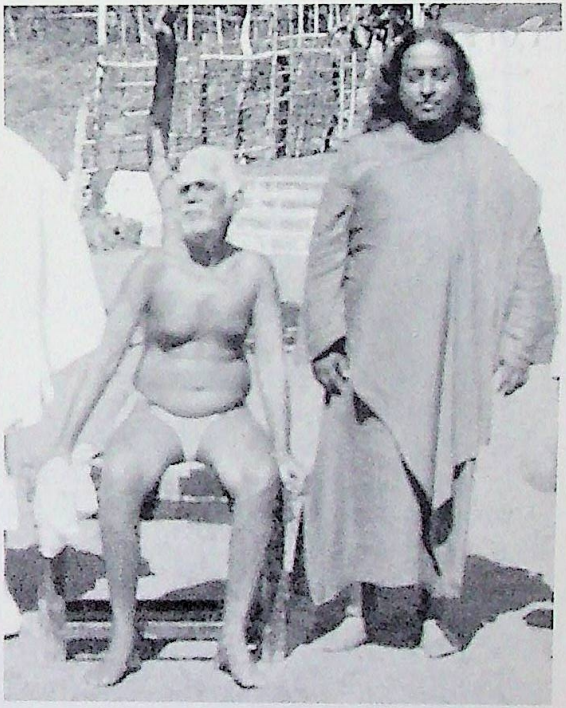


Swami Keshabananda (*standing, left*), a ninety-year-old disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya; Yoganandaji; and C. Richard Wright, at Keshabananda's ashram, Brindaban, 1936



Yoganandaji and Swami Dayananda, Mahamandal hermitage, Banaras, 1936



Ramana Maharshi and Yoganandaji at Sri Ramana's Arunachala ashram

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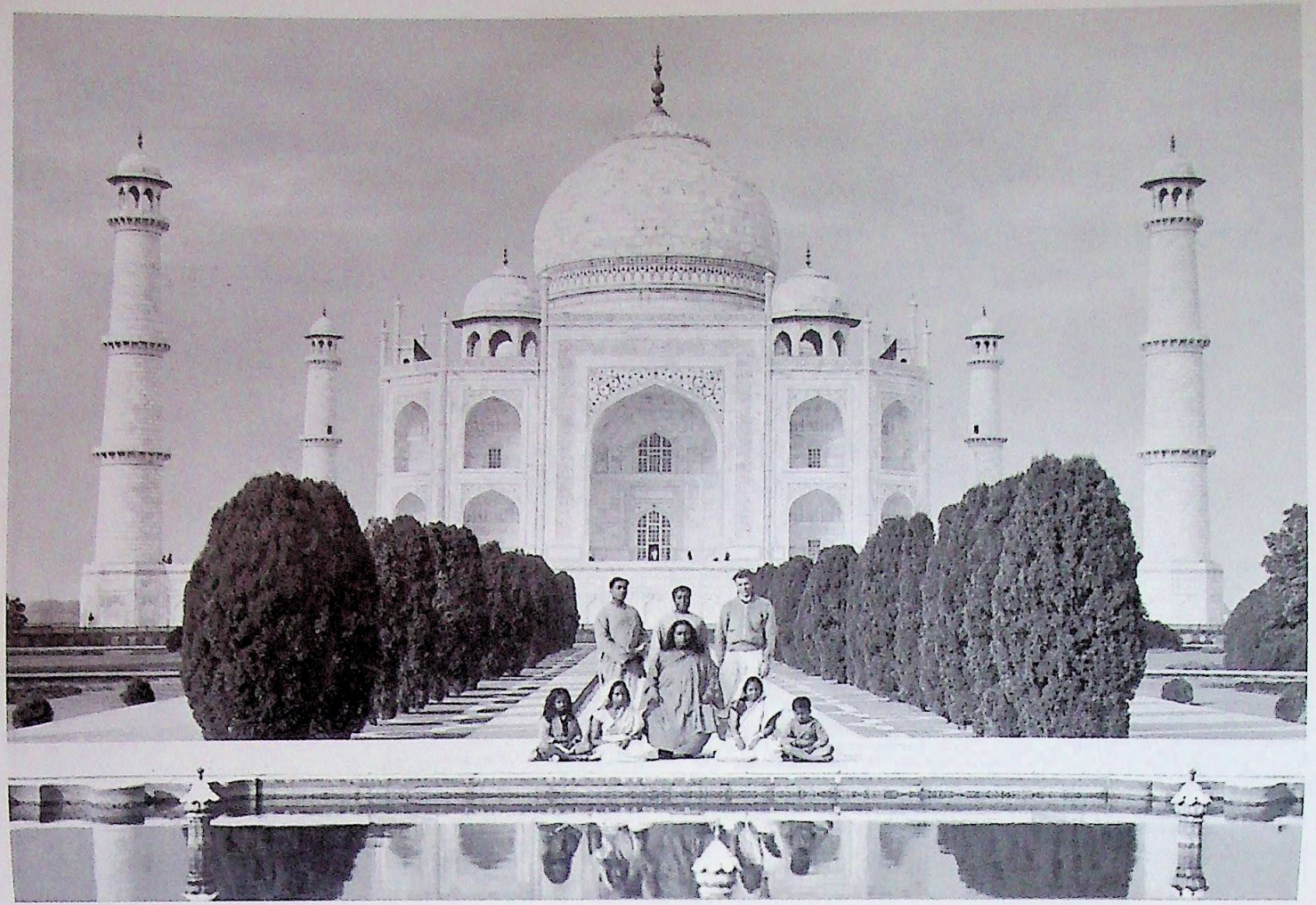

Paramahansa Yogananda and party visit Agra's Taj Mahal, the "dream in marble," 1936.

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Her brother Ferdinand, about twenty-three, explained that Therese has the power, through prayer, of working out on her own body the ailments of others. The saint's abstinence from food dates from a time when she prayed that the throat disease of a young man of her parish, then preparing to enter holy orders, be transferred to her own throat.

On Thursday afternoon our party drove to the home of the bishop, who looked at my flowing locks with some surprise. He readily wrote out the necessary permit. There was no fee; the rule made by the Church is simply to protect Therese from the onrush of casual tourists, who in previous years had flocked by thousands to Konnersreuth on Fridays.

We arrived in the village on Friday morning about nine-thirty. I noticed that Therese's little cottage possesses a glass-roofed section to afford her plenty of light. We were glad to see the doors no longer closed, but wide open in hospitable cheer. We joined a line of about twenty visitors, each carrying a permit. Many had come from great distances to view the mystic trance.

Therese had passed my first test at the professor's house by her intuitive knowledge that I wanted to see her for spiritual reasons, and not just to satisfy a passing curiosity.

My second test was connected with the fact that, just before I went upstairs to her room, I put myself into a yogic trance state in order to attain telepathic and televisional rapport with her. I entered her chamber, filled with visitors; she was lying in a white robe on the bed. With Mr. Wright close behind me, I halted just inside the threshold, awestruck at a strange and most frightful spectacle.

Blood flowed thinly and continuously in an inch-wide stream from Therese's lower eyelids. Her gaze was focused upward on the spiritual eye within the central forehead. The cloth wrapped around her head was drenched in blood from the stigmata wounds of the Crown of Thorns. The white garment was redly splotched over her heart from the wound in her side at the spot where Christ's body, long ages ago, had suffered the final indignity of the soldier's spear thrust.

Therese's hands were extended in a gesture maternal, pleading; her face wore an expression both tortured and divine. She appeared

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thinner and was subtly changed in many inner and outer ways. Murmuring words in a foreign tongue, she spoke with slightly quivering lips to persons who were visible to her superconscious sight.

As I was in attunement with her, I began to see the scenes of her vision. She was watching Jesus as he carried the timbers of the Cross amid the jeering multitude.* Suddenly she lifted her head in consternation: the Lord had fallen under the cruel weight. The vision disappeared. In the exhaustion of fervid pity, Therese sank heavily against her pillow.

At this moment I heard a loud thud behind me. Turning my head for a second, I saw two men carrying out a prostrate body. But because I was coming out of the deep superconscious state, I did not immediately recognize the fallen person. Again I fixed my eyes on Therese's face, deathly pale under the rivulets of blood, but now calm, radiating purity and holiness. I glanced behind me later and saw Mr. Wright standing with his hand against his cheek, from which blood was trickling.

"Dick," I inquired anxiously, "were you the one who fell?"

"Yes, I fainted at the terrifying spectacle."

"Well," I said consolingly, "you are brave to return and look upon the sight again."

Remembering the patiently waiting line of pilgrims, Mr. Wright and I silently bade farewell to Therese and left her sacred presence.†

The following day our little group motored south, thankful that we were not dependent on trains but could stop the Ford wherever we chose throughout the countryside. We enjoyed every minute of

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* During the hours preceding my arrival, Therese had already passed through many visions of the closing days in Christ's life. Her entrancement usually starts with scenes of the events that followed the Last Supper and ends with Jesus' death on the Cross; or, occasionally, with his entombment.

† An INS news dispatch from Germany, dated March 26, 1948, reported: "A German peasant woman lay on her cot this Good Friday; her head, hands, and shoulders blood-marked where Christ's body had bled from the nails of the Cross and the Crown of Thorns. Thousands of awe-filled Germans and Americans filed silently past the cottage bed of Therese Neumann."

The great stigmatist died in Konnersreuth on September 18, 1962. *(Publisher's Note)*

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a tour through Germany, Holland, France, and the Swiss Alps. In Italy we made a special trip to Assisi to honour the apostle of humility, St. Francis. The European tour ended in Greece, where we viewed the Athenian temples, and saw the prison in which the gentle Socrates* had drunk his death potion. One is filled with admiration for the artistry with which the ancient Greeks everywhere wrought their very fancies in alabaster.

We took ship over the sunny Mediterranean, disembarking at Palestine. Wandering day after day over the Holy Land, I was more than ever convinced of the value of pilgrimage. To the sensitive heart, the spirit of Christ is all-pervasive in Palestine. I walked reverently by his side at Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Calvary, the holy Mount of Olives, and by the River Jordan and the Sea of Galilee.

Our little party visited the Birth Manger, Joseph's carpenter shop, the tomb of Lazarus, the house of Martha and Mary, the hall of the Last Supper. Antiquity unfolded; scene by scene, I saw the divine drama that Christ once played for the ages.

On to Egypt, with its modern Cairo and ancient pyramids. Then a boat down the long Red Sea, over the vast Arabian Sea; lo, India!

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* A passage in Eusebius relates an interesting encounter between Socrates and a Hindu sage. The passage runs: "Aristoxenus, the musician, tells the following story about the Indians. One of these men met Socrates at Athens, and asked him what was the scope of his philosophy. 'An inquiry into human phenomena,' replied Socrates. At this the Indian burst out laughing. 'How can a man inquire into human phenomena,' he said, 'when he is ignorant of divine ones?' "

The Greek ideal, echoed in Western philosophies, is: "Man, know thyself." A Hindu would say: "Man, know thy Self." The dictum of Descartes: "I think, therefore I am," is not philosophically valid. The reasoning faculties cannot shed light on man's ultimate Being. The human mind, like the phenomenal world that it cognizes, is in perpetual flux and can yield no finalities. Intellectual satisfaction is not the highest goal. The seeker of God is the real lover of *vidya*, unchangeable truth; all else is *avidya*, relative knowledge.

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I Return to India

Gratefully I was inhaling the blessed air of India. Our boat *Rajputana* docked on August 22, 1935, in the huge harbour of Bombay. Even this, my first day off the ship, was a foretaste of the ceaselessly busy year ahead. Friends had gathered at the dock to welcome us with flower garlands; soon, at our suite in the Taj Mahal Hotel, we received several groups of reporters and photographers.

Bombay was a city new to me; I found it energetically modern, with many innovations from the West. Palms line the spacious boulevards; magnificent state structures vie for interest with ancient temples. Very little time was given to sight-seeing, however; I was impatient, eager to see my beloved guru and other dear ones. Consigning the Ford to a baggage car, our party was soon speeding eastward by train toward Calcutta.*

Our arrival at Howrah Station found such an immense crowd assembled to greet us that for a while we were unable to disembark from the train. The young Maharaja of Kasimbazar and my brother Bishnu headed the reception committee; I was unprepared for the warmth and magnitude of our welcome.

Preceded by a line of automobiles and motorcycles, and amidst

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* We broke our journey in Central Provinces, halfway across the continent, to see Mahatma Gandhi in Wardha. Those days are described in chapter 44.

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the joyous sounds of drums and conches, Miss Bletsch, Mr. Wright, and I, flower-garlanded from head to foot, drove slowly to my father's home.

My aged parent embraced me as one returning from the dead; long we gazed on each other, speechless with joy. Brothers and sisters, uncles, aunts, and cousins, students and friends of years long past were grouped around me, not a dry eye among us. Passed now into the archives of memory, the scene of loving reunion vividly endures, unforgettable in my heart. As for my meeting with Sri Yukteswar, words fail me; let the following description from my secretary suffice:

"Today, filled with the highest anticipations, I drove Yogananda ji from Calcutta to Serampore," Mr. Wright recorded in his travel diary.

"We passed by quaint shops — one of them the favourite eating place of Yogananda ji during his college days — and finally entered a narrow, walled lane. A sudden left turn, and there before us stood the two-storey brick ashram of the master, its grilled balcony jutting from the upper floor. The pervasive impression was that of peaceful solitude.

"In grave humility I walked behind Yogananda ji into the courtyard within the hermitage walls. Hearts beating fast, we proceeded up some old cement steps; trod, no doubt, by countless truth seekers. Our tension grew keener and keener as on we strode. Before us, near the head of the stairs, quietly appeared the Great One, Swami Sri Yukteswar ji, standing in the noble pose of a sage.

"My heart heaved and swelled at the blessing of being in his sublime presence. Tears blurred my eager sight when Yogananda ji dropped to his knees, and with bowed head offered his soul's gratitude and greeting; touching with his hand the guru's feet, and then, in humble obeisance, his own forehead. He rose then and was embraced on both sides on the bosom by Sri Yukteswar ji.

"No words passed in the beginning, but intense feeling was expressed in the mute phrases of the soul. How their eyes sparkled with the warmth of reunion! A tender vibration surged through the quiet patio, and the sun suddenly eluded the clouds to add a blaze of glory.

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"On bended knee before the master I gave my own unexpressed love and thanks; touching his feet, calloused by time and service, and receiving his blessing. I stood then and gazed into his beautiful eyes — deep with introspection yet radiant with joy.

"We entered his sitting room, whose whole side opens to the balcony first seen from the street. The master sat on a covered mattress placed on the cement floor, bracing himself against a worn davenport. Yoganandaji and I sat near the guru's feet, with orange-coloured pillows to lean against and to ease our positions on the straw mat.

"I tried without much success to understand the gist of the talk in Bengali between the two Swamijis (for they do not use English, I discovered, when they are together; although Swamiji Maharaj, as the great guru is called by others, can and often does speak it). But I easily perceived the saintliness of the Great One through his heart-warming smile and twinkling eyes. Quickly discernible in his merry or serious conversation is a positiveness in statement: the mark of a sage — one who knows he knows, because he knows God. The master's great wisdom, strength of purpose, and determination are apparent in every way.

"He was simply clad; his *dhoti* and shirt, once dyed an ochre color, are now a faded orange. Studying him reverently from time to time, I noted that he is of large, athletic stature; his body hardened by the trials and sacrifices of a renunciant's life. His poise is majestic. He moves with dignified tread and erect posture. A jovial and rollicking laugh comes from the depths of his chest, causing his whole body to shake and quiver.

"His austere face strikingly conveys an impression of divine power. His hair, parted in the middle, is white around the forehead, streaked elsewhere with silvery gold and silvery black, and ends in ringlets at his shoulders. His beard and moustache are scant or thinned out, and seem to enhance his features. His forehead slopes, as though seeking the heavens. His dark eyes are haloed by an ethereal blue ring. He has a rather large and homely nose, with which he amuses himself in idle moments; flipping and wiggling it with his fingers, like a child. In repose his mouth is stern, yet subtly touched with tenderness.

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"Glancing here and there, I observed that the somewhat dilapidated room suggests the owner's nonattachment to material comforts. The weather-stained white walls of the long chamber are streaked with fading blue plaster. At one end of the room hangs the unique picture of Lahiri Mahasaya, devotionally adorned with a simple garland. There is also an old photograph showing Yoganandaji at the time of his arrival in Boston, standing with other delegates to the Congress of Religions.

"I noted a quaint concurrence of old and new. A huge cut-glass candlelight chandelier is covered with cobwebs through long disuse; and on the wall hangs a bright up-to-date calendar. The room emanates a fragrance of peace and happiness.

"Beyond the balcony, coconut palms tower over the hermitage as though in silent protection.

"The master needs merely to clap his hands; before finishing, he is attended by some small disciple. One of them, a thin lad named Prafulla,* has long black hair, sparkling black eyes, and a heavenly smile: his eyes twinkle as the corners of his mouth rise, like stars and a crescent moon suddenly appearing at twilight.

"Swami Sri Yukteswarji's joy is obviously intense at the return of his 'product' (and he seems to be somewhat inquisitive about me, the 'product's product'). However, the predominance of wisdom in the Great One's nature hinders his outward expression of feeling.

"Yoganandaji presented him with some gifts, as is the custom when a disciple returns to his guru. We sat down later to a simple but well-cooked meal of vegetables and rice. Sri Yukteswarji was pleased at my observance of a number of Indian customs, 'finger-eating,' for example.

"After several hours of flying Bengali phrases and the exchange of warm smiles and joyful glances, we paid obeisance at his feet, bade adieu with a *pranam*,† and departed for Calcutta with an everlasting memory of a sacred meeting. Although I write

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* Prafulla was the lad who was present with Master when a cobra approached (see page 110).

† Lit., "complete salutation," from Sanskrit root *nam*, to salute or bow down; and the prefix *pra*, completely.

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chiefly of my external impressions of the master, yet I was always conscious of his spiritual glory. I felt his power, and shall ever retain that feeling as my divine blessing."

From America, Europe, and Palestine I had brought many presents for Sri Yukteswar. He received them smilingly, but without remark. For my own use, I had bought in Germany a combination umbrella-cane. In India I decided to give the cane to Master.

"This gift I appreciate indeed!" My guru's eyes were turned on me with affectionate understanding as he made the unwonted comment. From all the presents, it was the cane that he singled out to display to visitors.

"Master, please permit me to get a new carpet for the sitting room." I had noticed that Sri Yukteswar's tiger skin was placed over a torn rug.

"Do so if it pleases you." My guru's voice was not enthusiastic. "Behold, my tiger mat is nice and clean; I am monarch in my own little kingdom. Beyond it is the vast world, interested only in externals."

As he uttered these words I felt the years roll back; once again I am a young disciple, purified daily in fires of chastisement!

As soon as I could tear myself away from Serampore and Calcutta, I set out, with Mr. Wright, for Ranchi. What a welcome there, a touching ovation! Tears stood in my eyes as I embraced the selfless teachers who had kept the banner of the school flying during my fifteen years' absence. The bright faces and happy smiles of the residential and day students were ample testimony to the worth of their careful school and yoga training.

Yet, alas, the Ranchi institution was in dire financial difficulties. Sir Manindra Chandra Nundy, the old Maharaja whose Kasimbazar Palace had been converted into the central school building, and who had made many princely donations, was now dead. Many free, benevolent features of the school were seriously endangered for lack of sufficient public support.

I had not spent years in America without learning some of its practical wisdom, its undaunted spirit before obstacles. For one week I remained in Ranchi, wrestling with critical problems. Then came interviews in Calcutta with prominent leaders and educators,

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a long talk with the young Maharaja of Kasimbazar, a financial appeal to my father, and lo! the shaky foundations of the Ranchi school began to be righted. Many donations arrived in the nick of time from my American students.

Within a few months after my arrival in India, I had the joy of seeing the Ranchi school legally incorporated. My lifelong dream of a permanently endowed yoga educational centre was fulfilled. That aspiration had guided me in the humble beginnings in 1917 with a group of seven boys.

The school, Yogoda Satsanga Brahmacharya Vidyalaya, conducts outdoor classes in grammar- and high-school subjects. The resident students and day scholars also receive vocational training of some kind.

The boys themselves regulate many of their activities through autonomous committees. Very early in my career as an educator I discovered that boys who may impishly delight in outwitting a teacher will cheerfully accept disciplinary rules that are set by their fellow students. Never a model pupil myself, I had a ready sympathy for all boyish pranks and problems.

Sports and games are encouraged; the fields resound with hockey and football practice. Ranchi students often win the cup at competitive events. The boys are taught the Yogoda method of muscle recharging through will power: mental direction of life energy to any part of the body. They also learn *asanas* (postures) and sword and *lathi* (stick) play. Trained in first aid, the Ranchi students have given praiseworthy service to their province in tragic times of flood or famine. The boys work in the garden and grow their own vegetables.

Instruction in Hindi in primary-school subjects is provided for *Kols*, *Santals*, and *Mundas*, aboriginal tribes of the province. Classes for girls only are conducted in nearby villages.

The unique feature at Ranchi is the initiation into *Kriya Yoga*. The boys daily practice their spiritual exercises, engage in Gita chanting, and are taught by precept and example the virtues of simplicity, self-sacrifice, honour, and truth. Evil is pointed out to them as being that which produces misery; good as those actions which result in true happiness. Evil may be compared to poisoned honey,

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tempting but laden with death.

Overcoming restlessness of body and mind by concentration techniques has achieved astonishing results: it is no novelty at Ranchi to see an appealing little figure, aged nine or ten years, sitting for an hour or more in unbroken poise, the unwinking gaze directed to the spiritual eye.

In the orchard stands a Shiva temple, with a statue of the blessed master, Lahiri Mahasaya. Daily prayers and scripture classes are held in the garden under the mango bowers.

Yogoda Satsanga Sevashram ("Home of Service") on the Ranchi estate offers free surgical and medical aid to many thousands of India's poor.

Ranchi lies 2000 feet above sea level; the climate is mild and equable. The twenty-acre site, by a large bathing pond includes one of the finest private orchards in India: five hundred fruit trees — mango, date, guava, litchi, jackfruit.

The Ranchi library contains numerous magazines and a thousand volumes in English and Bengali, donations from the West and the East. There is a collection of the scriptures of the world. A well-classified museum displays precious stones and archaeological, geological, and anthropological exhibits: trophies, to a great extent, of my wanderings over the Lord's varied earth.*

Branch high schools, with the residential and yoga features of Ranchi, have been opened and are now flourishing. These are Yogoda Satsanga Vidyapith (School) for boys at Lakhanpur and Yogoda school and ashram at Ismalichak — in Purulia and Midnapur districts of West Bengal.†

A stately Yogoda Math in Dakshineswar, fronting the Ganges, was dedicated in 1939. Only a few miles north of Calcutta, the hermitage affords a haven of peace for city dwellers.

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* A museum in the West, with similar exhibits collected by Paramahansa Yogananda, is located at Self-Realization Fellowship Lake Shrine in Pacific Palisades, California. *(Publisher's Note)*

† Subsequently many Yogoda educational institutions for both boys and girls have been established and are now thriving in several locales in India. These institutions range from Kindergarten to college level. *(Publisher's Note)*.

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The Dakshineswar Math is the headquarters in India of Yogoda Satsanga Society and its schools, centres, and ashrams in various parts of India. Yogoda Satsanga Society of India is legally affiliated with the international headquarters: Self-Realization Fellowship in Los Angeles, California, U.S.A. Yogoda Satsanga* activities include monthly mailings of lessons to students in all parts of India. These lessons give detailed instruction in the Yogoda Satsanga Energization, Concentration, and Meditation Techniques. Their faithful practice constitutes the essential groundwork for the higher instruction in *Kriya Yoga*, which is given in subsequent lessons to qualified students.

Yogoda educational, religious, and humanitarian activities require the service and devotion of many teachers and workers. I do not list their names here, because they are so numerous; but in my heart each one has a lustrous niche.

Mr. Wright formed many friendships with Ranchi boys; clad in a simple *dhoti*, he lived for a while among them. In Bombay, Ranchi, Calcutta, Serampore, everywhere he went, my secretary, who has a gift of vivid description, would write in a travel diary his adventures. One evening I asked him a question.

"Dick, what is your impression of India?"

"Peace," he said thoughtfully. "The racial aura is peace."

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* "Yogoda" is derived from *yoga*, union, harmony, equilibrium; and *da*, that which imparts. "Satsanga" is composed of *sat*, truth, and *sanga*, fellowship.

"Yogoda" is a word coined by Paramahansa Yogananda in 1916, when he discovered the principles of recharging the human body with energy from the cosmic source. (See pages 247.)

Sri Yukteswar called his hermitage organization Satsanga (Fellowship with Truth); his disciple Paramahansaji naturally wished to retain that name.

Yogoda Satsanga Society of India is a nonprofit institution, designed to exist perpetually. Under that name Yoganandaji incorporated his work and foundations in India, which are now being ably administered by a Board of Directors at Yogoda Math in Dakshineswar, W. Bengal. Many YSS meditation centres are now flourishing in various parts of India.

In the west, Yoganandaji rendered the name of his society in English, incorporating his work there as Self-Realization Fellowship. Sri Sri Daya Mata has been the president since 1955 of both Yogoda Satsanga Society of India and Self-Realization Fellowship. (*Publisher's Note*)

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CHAPTER 41

An Idyl in South India

"You are the first Westerner, Dick, ever to enter that shrine. Many others have tried in vain."

At my words Mr. Wright looked startled, then pleased. We had just left the beautiful Chamundi Temple in the hills overlooking Mysore in southern India. There we had bowed before the gold and silver altars of the Goddess Chamundi, patron deity of the Mysore ruling family.

"As a souvenir of the unique honour," Mr. Wright said, carefully wrapping a few rose petals, "I will always preserve these petals, blessed by the priest with rose water."

My companion and I* were spending the month of November 1935, as guests of the State of Mysore. The Maharaja's† heir, H.H. the Yuvaraja, Sri Kantheerava Narasimharaja Wadiyar, had invited my secretary and me to visit his enlightened and progressive realm.

During the past fortnight I had addressed thousands of citizens and students in Mysore City at the Town Hall, the Maharaja's College, the University Medical School; and three mass meetings in Bangalore at the National High School, the Intermediate College, and Chetty Town Hall in which three thousand persons had assembled.

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* Miss Bletsch had remained behind with my relatives in Calcutta.

† The Yuvaraja's elder brother was Sri Krishna Rajendra Wadiyar IV.

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Whether the eager listeners had been able to credit the glowing picture I drew of America, I know not; but the applause had always been loudest when I spoke of the mutual benefits to be derived from exchange of the best features of East and West.

Mr. Wright and I were now relaxing in the tropical peace. His travel diary contains the following account of his impressions of Mysore:

"Many rapturous moments have been spent in gazing, almost absentmindedly, at the ever changing canvas of God stretched across the firmament, for His touch alone is able to produce colours that vibrate with the freshness of life. That youth of colours is lost when man tries to imitate with mere pigments, for the Lord resorts to a more simple and effective medium — neither oils nor pigments but mere rays of light. He tosses a splash of light here, and it reflects red; He waves the brush again and the colour blends gradually into orange and gold; then with a piercing thrust He stabs the clouds with a streak of purple that leaves a ringlet or fringe of red oozing out of the wound; and so, on and on He plays, night and morning alike, ever changing, ever new, ever fresh; no duplicates, no patterns or colours just the same. The beauty of the change in India from day to night, and from night to day, is beyond compare elsewhere; often the sky looks as if God had taken all the colours in His kit and had given them one mighty kaleidoscopic toss into the heavens.

"I must relate the splendour of a twilight visit to the huge Krishnaraja Sagar Dam,* twelve miles outside Mysore City. Yoganandaji and I boarded a small bus, and, with a small boy as official cranker or battery substitute, started off over a smooth dirt road just as the sun was setting, squashing on the horizon like an overripe tomato.

"Our journey led past the ever present square rice fields, through a grove of comforting banyan trees, in between towering coconut palms; nearly everywhere vegetation was as thick as in a jungle. Approaching the crest of a hill, we beheld an immense artificial lake, reflecting the stars and a fringe of palms and other trees, and

* An irrigation dam built in 1930 to serve the area near Mysore City, which is renowned for its silks, soaps, and sandalwood oil.

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surrounded by lovely terraced gardens and rows of electric lights.

"Below the brink of the dam we saw a dazzling spectacle: coloured beams playing on geyserlike fountains that resembled outpourings of brilliant inks — gorgeous blue, red, green, and yellow waterfalls; and majestic stone elephants spouting water. The dam (whose lighted fountains reminded me of those at the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago) is modernly outstanding in this ancient land of paddy fields and simple people. The Indians have given us such a loving welcome that I fear it will take more than my strength to bring Yoganandaji back to America.

"Another rare privilege — my first elephant ride. Yesterday the Yuvaraja invited us to his summer palace to enjoy a ride on one of his elephants, an enormous beast. I mounted a ladder provided to climb aloft to the *howdah* or saddle, which is silk-cushioned and boxlike; and then for a rolling, tossing, heaving, and swaying down into a gully — too much thrilled to worry or exclaim, but hanging on for dear life!"

Southern India, rich with historical and archaeological remains, is a land of definite and yet indefinable charm. To the north of Mysore is Hyderabad, a picturesque plateau cut by the mighty Godavari River. Broad fertile plains, the lovely Nilgiris or "Blue Mountains," other areas with barren hills of limestone or granite. Hyderabad history is a long, colourful story, starting three thousand years ago under the Andhra kings and continuing under Hindu dynasties until A.D. 1294, when the region passed to a line of Moslem rulers.

The most breathtaking display of architecture, sculpture, and painting in all India is found at Hyderabad in the ancient rock-sculptured caves of Ellora and Ajanta.* The Kailasa at Ellora, a huge monolithic temple, possesses carved figures of gods, men, and beasts in the stupendous proportions of a Michelangelo. Ajanta is the site of twenty-five monasteries and five cathedrals, all rock excavations supported by tremendous frescoed pillars on which artists and sculptors have immortalized their genius.

* Since the redefining of the boundaries in 1950, the caves are now located in the state of Maharashtra. *(Publisher's Note)*

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Hyderabad City is graced by Osmania University and by the imposing Mecca Masjid Mosque in which ten thousand Moslems assemble for prayer.

Mysore State, three thousand feet above sea level, abounds in dense tropical forests: the home of wild elephants, bison, bears, panthers, and tigers. The two chief cities, Bangalore and Mysore, are clean and attractive, with many beautiful parks and public gardens.

Hindu architecture and sculpture achieved their highest perfection in Mysore under the patronage of Hindu kings from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. The temple at Belur, an eleventh-century masterpiece completed during the reign of King Vishnuvardhana, is unsurpassed in the world for delicacy of detail and exuberant imagery.

The rock edicts found in northern Mysore date from the third century B.C. They illuminate the memory of King Asoka,* whose vast empire included India, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan. Inscribed in various dialects, Asoka's "sermons in stone" bear witness to the widespread literacy of his day. Rock Edict XIII denounces wars: "Consider nothing as true conquest save that of religion." Rock Edict X declares that a king's true glory depends on the moral progress he aids his people in attaining. Rock Edict XI defines "the true gift" to be, not goods, but Good — the spreading of truth. On Rock Edict VI the beloved emperor invites his subjects to confer with him on public business "at any hour of the day or night," adding that by faithful discharge of his kingly duties he was thus "obtaining his own release from the debt he owed his fellowmen."

Asoka was a grandson of the formidable Chandragupta Maurya, who destroyed the garrisons left in India by Alexander the Great and who in 305 B.C. defeated the invading Macedonian army of Seleucus. Chandragupta then received at his court in

* Emperor Asoka erected 84,000 religious *stupas* (shrines) in various parts of India. Fourteen rock edicts and ten stone pillars survive. Each pillar is a triumph of engineering, architecture, and sculpture. He arranged for the construction of many reservoirs, dams, and irrigation sluices; of highways and tree-shaded roads dotted with rest houses for travellers; of botanical gardens for medicinal purposes; and of hospitals for man and beast.

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Pataliputra* the Greek ambassador Megasthenes, who has left us descriptions of the happy and enterprising India of his day.

In 298 B.C. the victorious Chandragupta handed over the reins of India's government to his son. Travelling to South India, Chandragupta spent the last twelve years of his life as a penniless ascetic, seeking Self-realization in a rocky cave in Sravanabelagola, now a Mysore shrine. The same region boasts the world's largest monolithic statue, carved out of an immense boulder by the Jains in A.D. 983 to honour the sage Gomateswara.

Interesting stories have been minutely recorded by Greek historians and others who accompanied or followed after Alexander in his expedition to India. The narratives of Arrian, Diodoros, Plutarch, and Strabo the geographer have been translated by Dr. J. W. McCrindle† to throw a shaft of light on ancient India. The most admirable feature of Alexander's unsuccessful invasion was the deep interest he displayed in Hindu philosophy and in the yogis and holy men whom he encountered from time to time and whose society he eagerly sought. Shortly after the Western warrior arrived in Taxila in northern India, he sent Onesikritos (a disciple of the Hellenic school of Diogenes) to fetch a great sannyasi of Taxila, Dandamis.

"Hail to thee, O teacher of *Brahmins*!" Onesikritos said after seeking out Dandamis in his forest retreat. "The son of the mighty God Zeus, being Alexander who is the Sovereign Lord of all men, asks you to go to him. If you comply, he will reward you with great gifts; if you refuse, he will cut off your head!"

The yogi received calmly this fairly compulsive invitation, and "did not so much as lift up his head from his couch of leaves."

"I also am a son of Zeus, if Alexander be such," he commented. "I want nothing that is Alexander's, for I am content with what I

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* The city of Pataliputra (modern Patna) has a fascinating history. Lord Buddha visited the site in the sixth century B.C. when it was only an unimportant fort. He made this prophecy: "As far as Aryan people resort, as far as merchants travel, Pataliputra will become for them the chief city, a centre for the interchange of all kinds of wares" (*Mahaparinirbana Sutra*). Two centuries later Pataliputra became the capital city of the huge empire of Chandragupta Maurya. His grandson Asoka brought the metropolis to an even greater prosperity and splendour.

† Six volumes on *Ancient India* (Calcutta: Chuckervertty, Chatterjee & Co., 15 College Square; 1879, reissued 1927).

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have, while I see that he wanders with his men over sea and land for no advantage, and is never coming to an end of his wanderings.

"Go and tell Alexander that God the Supreme King is never the Author of insolent wrong, but is the Creator of light, of peace, of life, of water, of the body of man and of souls; He receives all men when death sets them free, being then in no way subject to evil disease. He alone is the God of my homage, who abhors slaughter and instigates no wars.

"Alexander is no god, since he must taste of death," continued the sage in quiet scorn. "How can such as he be the world's master, when he has not yet seated himself on a throne of inner universal dominion? Neither as yet has he entered living into Hades, nor does he even know the course of the sun over the vast regions of this earth. Most nations have not so much as heard his name!"

After this chastisement — surely the most caustic ever sent to assault the ears of the "Lord of the World" — the sage added ironically, "If Alexander's present dominions be not capacious enough for his desires, let him cross the Ganges River; there he will find a country able to sustain all his men.*

"The gifts Alexander promises are useless to me," Dandamis went on. "The things I prize and find of real worth are trees, which are my shelter; blooming plants, which provide my daily food; and water, which assuages my thirst. Possessions amassed with anxious thought are wont to prove ruinous to those who gather them, causing only the sorrow and vexation that afflict all unenlightened men.

"As for me, I lie upon forest leaves, and, having nothing to guard, close my eyes in tranquil slumber; whereas, had I anything of worldly value, that burden would banish sleep. The earth supplies me with everything I need, even as a mother provides her child with milk. I go wherever I please, unencumbered by material cares.

"Should Alexander cut off my head, he cannot also destroy my soul. My head, then silent, and my body, like a torn garment, will remain on the earth, from which their elements were taken. I then,

* Neither Alexander nor any of his generals ever crossed the Ganges. Finding determined resistance in the northwest, the Macedonian army mutinied by refusing to penetrate farther; Alexander was forced to leave India. He sought further conquests in Persia.

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becoming Spirit, shall ascend to God. He enclosed us all in flesh and put us on earth to prove whether, when here below, we shall live obedient to His ordinances; and He will require of us, when we depart hence, an account of our lives. He is the Judge of all wrongdoing; the groans of the oppressed ordain the punishment of the oppressor.

"Let Alexander terrify with threats men who wish for wealth and who dread death. Against the Brahmins his weapons are powerless; we neither love gold nor fear death. Go then and tell Alexander this: Dandamis has no need of aught that is yours, and therefore will not go to you; and, if you want anything from Dandamis, come you to him."

Onesikritos duly conveyed the message; Alexander listened with close attention, and "felt a stronger desire than ever to see Dandamis; who, though old and naked, was the only antagonist in whom he, the conqueror of many nations, had met more than his match."

Alexander invited to Taxila a number of Brahmin ascetics noted for their skill in answering philosophical questions with pithy wisdom. An account of the verbal skirmish is given by Plutarch; Alexander himself framed all the questions.

"Which be the more numerous, the living or the dead?"

"The living, for the dead are not."

"Which breeds the larger animals, the sea or the land?"

"The land, for the sea is only a part of land."

"Which is the cleverest of beasts?"

"That one with which man is not yet acquainted." (Man fears the unknown.)

"Which existed first, the day or the night?"

"The day was first by one day." This reply caused Alexander to betray surprise; the Brahmin added: "Impossible questions require impossible answers."

"How best may a man make himself beloved?"

"A man will be beloved if, possessed with great power, he still does not make himself feared."

"How may a man become a god?"*

* From this question we may surmise that the "Son of Zeus" had an occasional doubt that he had already attained perfection.

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"By doing that which it is impossible for a man to do."

"Which is stronger, life or death?"

"Life, because it bears so many evils."

Alexander succeeded in taking out of India, as his teacher, a true yogi. This man was Kalyana (Swami Sphines), called "Kalanos" by the Greeks. The sage accompanied Alexander to Persia. On a stated day, at Susa in Persia, Kalanos gave up his aged body by entering a funeral pyre in view of the whole Macedonian army. The historians record the astonishment of the soldiers as they observed that the yogi had no fear of pain or death; he never once moved from his position as he was consumed in the flames. Before leaving for his cremation, Kalanos had embraced many of his close companions but had refrained from bidding farewell to Alexander, to whom the Hindu sage had merely remarked:

"I shall see you later in Babylon."

Alexander left Persia and, a year later, died in Babylon. The prophecy had been the Indian guru's way of saying that he would be present with Alexander in life and death.

The Greek historians have left us many vivid and inspiring pictures of Indian society. Hindu law, Arrian tells us, protects the people and "ordains that no one among them shall, under any circumstances, be a slave; but that, enjoying freedom themselves, they shall respect the equal right to it that all men possess."*

"The Indians," states another text, "neither put out money at usury, nor know how to borrow. It is contrary to established practice for the Indians to do or to suffer a wrong; therefore they neither make contracts nor require securities." Healing, we are told, was by simple and natural means. "Cures are effected rather by regulating diet than by the use of medicines. The remedies most esteemed are

* All Greek observers comment on the lack of slavery in India, a feature at complete variance with the structure of Hellenic society.

Creative India by Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar gives a comprehensive picture of India's ancient and modern achievements and distinctive values in economics, political science, literature, art, and social philosophy. (Lahore: Motilal Banarsi Dass, Publishers, 1937, 714 pp.)

Another recommended volume is *Indian Culture Through the Ages*, by S. V. Venkatesvara (New York: Longmans, Green & Co.).

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ointments and plasters. All others are considered to be in great measure pernicious." Engagement in war was restricted to the *Kshatriyas* or warrior caste. "Nor would an enemy, coming upon a husbandman at work on his land, do him any harm; for men of this class are regarded as public benefactors and are protected from all injury. The land, thus remaining unravaged and producing heavy crops, supplies the inhabitants with the requisites to make life enjoyable."

The ubiquitous religious shrines of Mysore are a constant reminder of the many great saints of South India. One of these masters, Thayumanavar, has left us the following challenging poem:

> You may control a mad elephant;
> You may shut the mouth of the bear and the tiger;
> Ride the lion and play with the cobra;
> By alchemy you may earn your livelihood;
> You may wander through the universe incognito;
> Make vassals of the gods; be ever youthful;
> You may walk on water and live in fire:
> But control of the mind is better and more difficult.

In the beautiful and fertile State of Travancore in the extreme south of India, where traffic is conveyed over rivers and canals, the Maharaja assumes every year a hereditary obligation to expiate the sin incurred by wars and the annexation in the distant past of several petty states to Travancore. For fifty-six days annually the Maharaja visits the temple thrice daily to hear Vedic hymns and recitations; the expiation ceremony ends with the *lakshadipam* or illumination of the temple by a hundred thousand lights.

Madras Presidency on the southeast coast of India contains the flat, spacious, sea-girt city of Madras, and Conjeeveram, the Golden City, capital site of the Pallava Dynasty whose kings ruled during the early centuries of the Christian era. In modern Madras Presidency the nonviolent ideals of Mahatma Gandhi have made great headway; the white distinguishing "Gandhi caps" are seen everywhere. In the south generally the Mahatma has effected many important temple reforms for "untouchables" as well as caste-system reforms.

The origin of the caste system, formulated by the great legislator Manu, was admirable. He saw clearly that men are distinguished by natural evolution into four great classes: those capable

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of offering service to society through their bodily labour (*Sudras*); those who serve through mentality, skill, agriculture, trade, commerce, business life in general (*Vaisyas*); those whose talents are administrative, executive, and protective — rulers and warriors (*Kshatriyas*); those of contemplative nature, spiritually inspired and inspiring (*Brahmins*). "Neither birth nor sacraments nor study nor ancestry can decide whether a person is twice-born (i.e., a *Brahmin*)," the *Mahabharata* declares, "character and conduct only can decide."* Manu instructed society to show respect to its members insofar as they possessed wisdom, virtue, age, kinship or, lastly, wealth. Riches in Vedic India were always despised if they were hoarded or unavailable for charitable purposes. Ungenerous men of great wealth were assigned a low rank in society.

Serious evils arose when the caste system became hardened through the centuries into a hereditary halter. India, self-governing

* "Inclusion in one of these four castes originally depended not on a man's birth but on his natural capacities as demonstrated by the goal in life he elected to achieve," writes Tara Mata in *East-West* for January 1935. "This goal could be (1) *kama*, desire, activity of the life of the senses (*Sudra* stage), (2) *artha*, gain, fulfilling but controlling the desires (*Vaisya* stage), (3) *dharma*, self-discipline, the life of responsibility and right action (*Kshatriya* stage), (4) *moksha*, liberation, the life of spirituality and religious teaching (*Brahmin* stage). These four castes render service to humanity by (1) body, (2) mind, (3) will power, (4) Spirit.

"These four stages have their correspondence in the eternal *gunas* or qualities of nature, *tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva:* obstruction, activity, and expansion; or, mass, energy, and intelligence. The four natural castes are marked by the *gunas* as (1) *tamas* (ignorance), (2) *tamas-rajas* (mixture of ignorance and activity), (3) *rajas-sattva* (mixture of right activity and enlightenment), (4) *sattva* (enlightenment). Thus has nature marked every man with his caste, by the predominance in himself of one, or the mixture of two, of the *gunas*. Of course every human being has all three *gunas* in varying proportions. The guru will be able rightly to determine a man's caste or evolutionary status.

"To a certain extent, all races and nations observe in practice, if not in theory, the features of caste. Where there is great license or so-called liberty, particularly in intermarriage between extremes in the natural castes, the race dwindles away and becomes extinct. The *Purana Sambita* compares the offspring of such unions to barren hybrids, like the mule, which is incapable of propagation of its own species. Artificial species are eventually exterminated. History offers abundant proof of numerous great races that no longer have any living representatives. The caste system of India is credited by her most profound thinkers with being the check or preventive against license that has preserved the purity of the race and brought it safely through millenniums of vicissitudes, while many other ancient races have completely vanished."

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since 1947, is making slow but sure progress in restoring the ancient values of caste, based solely on natural qualification and not on birth. Every nation on earth has its own distinctive misery-producing karma to deal with and honourably remove. India, with her versatile and invulnerable spirit, is proving herself equal to the task of caste reformation.

So entrancing is southern India that Mr. Wright and I yearned to prolong our idyl. But time, in its immemorial rudeness, dealt us no courteous extensions. I was scheduled soon to address the concluding session of the Indian Philosophical Congress at Calcutta University. At the end of the visit to Mysore, I enjoyed a talk with Sir C. V. Raman, president of the Indian Academy of Sciences. This brilliant Hindu physicist was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1930 for the "Raman Effect," his important discovery in the diffusion of light.

Waving a reluctant farewell to a crowd of Madras students and friends, Mr. Wright and I set out on our travels. On the way we stopped before a little shrine sacred to the memory of Sadasiva Brahman,* in whose eighteenth-century life story miracles cluster thickly. A larger Sadasiva shrine at Nerur, erected by the Raja of Pudukkottai, is a pilgrimage spot that has witnessed many divine healings. The successive rulers of Pudukkottai have treasured as sacred the religious instructions that Sadasiva wrote in 1750 for the guidance of the reigning prince.

Many quaint stories of Sadasiva, a lovable and fully illumined master, are still current among South Indian villagers. Immersed one day in *samadhi* on a bank of the Kaveri River, Sadasiva was seen to be carried away by a sudden flood. Weeks later he was found buried deep beneath a mound of earth near Kodumudi in Coimbatore District. As the villagers' shovels struck his body, the saint rose and walked briskly away.

Sadasiva became a *muni* (nonspeaking saint) after his guru had rebuked him for worsting in dialectical argument an elderly *Vedanta*

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* His formal title was Swami Sri Sadasivendra Saraswati, under which he wrote his books (commentaries on *Brahma Sutras* and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*).

The late Shankaracharya of Sringeri Math, His Holiness Sri Sacchidananda Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharati, wrote an inspiring *Ode* to Sadasiva.

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scholar. "When will you, a youth, learn to hold your tongue?" the guru had remarked.

"With your blessings, even from this moment."

Sadasiva's guru was Swami Sri Paramasivendra Saraswati, author of *Daharavidya Prakasika* and a profound commentary on *Uttara Gita*. Certain worldly men, affronted because the God-intoxicated Sadasiva was often to be seen dancing "without decorum" on the streets, carried their complaints to his learned guru. "Sir," they declared, "Sadasiva is no better than a madman."

But Paramasivendra smiled joyfully. "Oh," he exclaimed, "if only others had such madness!"

Sadasiva's life was marked by many strange and beautiful manifestations of the Intervening Hand. Much seeming injustice there is in this world; but God's devotees can testify to countless instances of His immediate righteousness. One night Sadasiva, in *samadhi*, halted near the granary of a rich householder. Three servants, on the lookout for thieves, raised their sticks to strike the saint. Lo! their arms were immobilized. Like statues, their arms aloft, the trio stood in unique tableau until the departure of Sadasiva at dawn.

On another occasion the great master was roughly pressed into service by a passing foreman whose labourers were carrying fuel. The silent saint humbly bore his burden to the required destination and there placed his load on top of a huge pile. The whole heap of fuel at once burst into flames.

Sadasiva, like Trailanga Swami, wore no cloth. One morning the nude yogi absentmindedly entered the tent of a Moslem chieftain. Two ladies screamed in alarm; the warrior dealt a savage sword thrust at Sadasiva, whose arm was severed. The master departed unconcernedly. Overcome by awe and remorse, the Moslem picked up the arm from the floor and followed Sadasiva. The yogi quietly inserted his arm into the bleeding stump. When the chieftain humbly asked for some spiritual instruction, Sadasiva wrote with his finger in the sands:

"Do not do what you want, and then you may do what you like."

The Moslem was uplifted to a purified state of mind and understood the paradoxical advice to be a guide to soul freedom through mastery of the ego. So great was the spiritual impact of

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those few words that the warrior became a worthy disciple; his former haunts knew him no more.

The village children once expressed a desire in Sadasiva's presence to see the Madura religious festival, 150 miles away. The yogi indicated to the little ones that they should touch his body. Lo! instantly the whole group was transported to Madura. The children wandered happily among the thousands of pilgrims. In a few hours the yogi brought his small charges home by his simple mode of transportation. The astonished parents listened to vivid tales about the procession of images in Madura, and noticed that the children were carrying bags of Madura sweets.

An incredulous youth derided the saint and the story. On the occasion of the next religious festival, held in Srirangam, the boy approached Sadasiva.

"Master," he said scornfully, "why don't you take me to the festival in Srirangam, even as you took the other children to Madura?"

Sadasiva complied; the boy immediately found himself among the distant city throng. But alas! where was the saint when the youth wanted to leave? The weary boy reached his home by the prosaic method of foot locomotion.

Before leaving South India, Mr. Wright and I made a pilgrimage to the holy hill of Arunachala near Tiruvannamalai to meet Sri Ramana Maharshi. At his ashram the sage welcomed us affectionately and pointed to a nearby stack of *East-West* magazines. During the hours that we spent with him and his disciples, he was mostly silent, his gentle face radiating divine love and wisdom.

To help suffering humanity regain its forgotten state of Perfection, Sri Ramana teaches that one should constantly ask himself: "Who am I?"—the Great Inquiry indeed. By stern rejection of all other thoughts the devotee soon finds himself going deeper and deeper into the true Self, and the sidetracking bewilderments of other thoughts cease to arise. The illumined rishi of South India has written:

> Dualities and trinities on something do hang,
> Supportless they never appear;
> That support searched for, they loosen and fall.
> There is the Truth. Who sees that never wavers.

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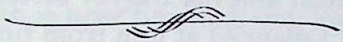
CHAPTER 42

Last Days With My Guru



"Guruji, I am glad to find you alone this morning." I had just arrived at the Serampore hermitage, carrying a fragrant burden of fruit and roses. Sri Yukteswar glanced at me meekly.

"What is your question?" Master looked about the room as though seeking escape.

"Guruji, I came to you as a high-school youth; now I am a grown man, even with a grey hair or two. Though you have showered me with silent affection from the first hour to this, do you realize that once only, on the day of meeting, have you ever said, 'I love you'?" I looked at him pleadingly.

Master lowered his gaze. "Yogananda, must I bring out into the cold realms of speech the warm sentiments best guarded by the wordless heart?"

"Guruji, I know you love me, but my mortal ears ache to hear you say so."

"Be it as you wish. During my married life I often yearned for a son, to train in the yogic path. But when you came into my life, I was content; in you I have found my son." Two clear teardrops stood in Sri Yukteswar's eyes. "Yogananda, I love you always."

"Your answer is my passport to heaven." I felt a weight lift from my heart, dissolved forever at his words. I knew he was unemotional and self-contained, yet often I had wondered at his silence. Sometimes I feared I had been unsuccessful in fully satisfying him.

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His was a strange nature, never utterly to be known; a nature deep and still, unfathomable to the outer world, whose values he had long transcended.

A few days later I spoke before a huge audience at Albert Hall in Calcutta. Sri Yukteswar consented to sit on the platform, with the Maharaja of Santosh and the Mayor of Calcutta. Master made no remark to me, but I glanced at him from time to time during my address and thought he looked pleased.

Then came a talk before the alumni of Serampore College. As I gazed on my old classmates, and as they gazed on their own "Mad Monk," tears of joy showed unashamedly. My silver-tongued professor of philosophy, Dr. Ghoshal, came forward to greet me, all our past misunderstandings dissolved by the alchemist Time.

A Winter Solstice Festival was celebrated at the end of December in the Serampore hermitage. As always, Sri Yukteswar's disciples gathered from far and near. Devotional *sankirtans*, solos in the nectar-sweet voice of Kristo-da, a feast served by young disciples, Master's profoundly moving discourse under the stars in the thronged courtyard of the ashram memories, memories! Joyous festivals of years long past! Tonight, however, there was to be a new feature.

"Yogananda, please address the assemblage — in English." Master's eyes were twinkling as he made this doubly unusual request; was he thinking of the shipboard predicament that had preceded my first lecture in English? I told the story to my audience of brother disciples, ending with a fervent tribute to our guru.

"His unfailing guidance was with me not only on the ocean steamer," I concluded, "but daily throughout my fifteen years in the vast and hospitable land of America."

After the guests had departed, Sri Yukteswar called me to the same bedroom where (once only, after a similar festival) I had been permitted to sleep in his bed. Tonight my guru was sitting there quietly, a semicircle of disciples at his feet.

"Yogananda, are you leaving now for Calcutta? Please return here tomorrow. I have certain things to tell you."

The next afternoon, with a few simple words of blessing,

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Sri Yukteswar bestowed on me the further monastic title of *Paramahansa*.*

"It now formally supersedes your former title of *Swami*," he said as I knelt before him. With a silent chuckle I thought of the struggles to be undergone by my Western students over the pronunciation of *Paramahansaji*.†

"My task on earth is now finished; you must carry on." Master spoke quietly, his eyes calm and gentle. My heart was palpitating in fear.

"Please send someone to take charge of our ashram in Puri," Sri Yukteswar went on. "I leave everything in your hands. You will be able successfully to sail the boat of your life and that of the organization to the divine shores."

In tears I was embracing his feet; he rose and blessed me lovingly.

The following day I summoned from Ranchi a devotee, Swami Sebananda, and sent him to Puri to assume the hermitage duties. Later my guru discussed with me the legal details of settling his estate; he was anxious to prevent the possibility of litigation by relatives, after his death, for possession of his two hermitages and other properties, which he wished to be deeded over solely for charitable purposes.

"Arrangements were recently made for Master to visit Kidderpore, but he failed to go." Amulaya Babu, a brother disciple, made this remark to me one afternoon; I felt a cold wave of premonition. To my pressing inquiries, Sri Yukteswar only replied, "I shall go to Kidderpore no more." For a moment, Master trembled like a frightened child.

("Attachment to bodily residence, springing up of its own

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* Lit., *parama*, highest; *hansa*, swan. The white swan is mythologically represented as the vehicle or mount of Brahma the Creator. The sacred *hansa*, said to have the power of extracting only milk from a mixture of milk and water, is thus a symbol of spiritual discrimination.

Ahan-sa or 'han-sa is literally "I am He." These potent Sanskrit syllables possess a vibratory connection with the incoming and the outgoing breath. Thus with his every breath man unconsciously asserts the truth of his being: *I am He!*

† They have generally evaded the difficulty by addressing me as *sir*.

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nature,* is present in slight degree even in great saints," Patanjali wrote. In some of my guru's discourses on death, he had been wont to add: "Just as a long-caged bird hesitates to leave its accustomed home when the door is opened.")

"Guruji," I entreated him with a sob, "don't say that! Never utter those words to me!"

Sri Yukteswar's face relaxed in a peaceful smile. Though nearing his eighty-first birthday, he looked well and strong.

Basking day by day in the sunshine of my guru's love, unspoken but keenly felt, I banished from my conscious mind the various hints he had given of his approaching passing.

"Sir, the *Kumbha Mela* is convening this month at Allahabad." I pointed out to Master the *mela* dates in a Bengali almanac.†

"Do you really want to go?"

Not sensing Sri Yukteswar's reluctance to have me leave him, I went on, "Once you beheld the blessed sight of Babaji at an Allahabad *kumbha*. Perhaps this time I shall be fortunate enough to see him."

"I do not think you will meet him there." My guru then fell into silence, not wishing to obstruct my plans.

When I set out for Allahabad the following day with a small group, Master blessed me quietly in his usual manner. Apparently I was remaining oblivious to implications in Sri Yukteswar's attitude because the Lord wished to spare me the experience of being forced, helplessly, to witness my guru's passing. It has always happened in

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* That is, springing from immemorial roots, past experiences of death. This passage occurs in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* II:9.

† Religious *melas* are mentioned in the ancient *Mahabharata*. The Chinese traveller Hieuen Tsiang has left an account of a vast *Kumbha Mela* held in A.D. 644 at Allahabad. *Kumbha Mela* is held every third year, successively, in Hardwar, Allahabad, Nasik, and Ujjain, returning to Hardwar to complete a twelve-year cycle. Each city holds *Ardha* (half) *Kumbha* in the sixth year after its *Kumbha*; thus *Kumbha* and *Ardha Kumbha* are held, in different cities, every three years.

Hieuen Tsiang tells us that Harsha, king of northern India, distributed to the monks and pilgrims at the *Kumbha Mela* the entire wealth (a five-year accumulation) of the royal treasury. When Hieuen Tsiang departed for China he refused Harsha's parting gifts of jewels and gold; but carried away, as of greater value, 657 religious manuscripts.

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my life that, at the death of those dearly beloved by me, God has compassionately arranged that I be distant from the scene.*

Our party reached the *Kumbha Mela* on January 23, 1936. The surging crowd of nearly two million persons was an impressive sight, even an overwhelming one. The peculiar genius of the Indian people is the reverence innate in even the lowliest peasant for the worth of the Spirit and for the monks and sadhus who have forsaken worldly ties to seek a diviner anchorage. Impostors and hypocrites there are indeed; but India respects all for the sake of the few who illumine the land with supernal blessings. Westerners who were viewing the vast spectacle had a unique opportunity to feel the pulse of the nation, the spiritual ardour to which India owes her quenchless vitality under the blows of time.

The first day was spent by our group in sheer staring. Thousands of pilgrims bathed in the holy Ganges for remission of sins; Brahmin priests performed solemn rituals of worship; devotional offerings were strewn at the feet of silent sanyasis; lines of elephants, caparisoned horses, and slow-paced Rajputana camels filed by, followed by a quaint religious parade of naked sadhus who waved gold and silver sceptres or streamers of silken velvet.

Anchorites wearing only loincloths sat quietly in little groups, their bodies besmeared with ashes, which protect them from heat and cold. The spiritual eye was vividly represented on their foreheads by a single spot of sandalwood paste. Shaven-headed swamis appeared by the thousand, ochre-robed and carrying their bamboo staff and begging bowl. Their faces beamed with the renunciant's peace as they walked about or held philosophical discussions with disciples.

Here and there under the trees, around huge piles of burning logs, were picturesque sadhus,† their hair braided and massed in

* I was not present at the deaths of my mother, elder brother Ananta, eldest sister Roma, Master, Father, and many other beloved ones. (Father passed on in Calcutta in 1942, aged eighty-nine.)

† The hundreds of thousands of Indian sadhus are controlled by an executive committee of seven leaders, representing seven large sections of India. The present *mahamandaleswar* or president is Sri Sri Joyendra Puri. This saintly man is extremely reserved, often confining his speech to three words—Truth, Love, and Work. A sufficient discourse!

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coils on top of their heads. Some wore beards several feet in length, curled and tied in a knot. They meditated quietly, or extended their hands in blessing to the passing throng — beggars, maharajas on elephants, women in multicoloured saris, their bangles and anklets tinkling, *fakirs* with thin arms held grotesquely aloft, *brahmacharis* carrying meditation elbow-props, humble sages whose solemnity hid an inner bliss. High above the din we heard the ceaseless summons of the temple bells.

On our second *mela* day my companions and I entered various ashrams and temporary huts, offering *pranams* to saintly personages. We received the blessing of the leader of the *Giri* branch of the Swami Order — a thin, ascetical monk with eyes of smiling fire. Our party then visited a hermitage whose guru had observed for the past nine years the vows of silence and a strict fruitarian diet. On a dais in the ashram hall sat a blind sadhu, Prajna Chakshu,* profoundly learned in the *shastras* and highly revered by all sects.

After I had given a brief discourse in Hindi on *Vedanta*, our group left the peaceful hermitage to greet a nearby swami, Krishnananda, a handsome monk with rosy cheeks and impressive shoulders. Reclining near him was a tame lioness. Succumbing to the monk's spiritual charm — not, I am sure, to his powerful physique! — the jungle animal refuses all meat in favour of rice and milk. The swami has taught the tawny-haired beast to utter "Aum" in a deep, attractive growl — a cat devotee!

Our next encounter, an interview with a learned young sadhu, is well described in Mr. Wright's sparkling travel diary.

"We rode in the Ford across the very low Ganges on a creaking pontoon bridge, crawling snakelike through the crowds and over narrow, twisting lanes, passing the site on the riverbank which Yoganandaji pointed out to me as the meeting place of Babaji and Sri Yukteswarji. Alighting from the car a short time later, we walked some distance through the thickening smoke of the sadhus' fires and over the slippery sands to reach a cluster of tiny, very

* A title whose literal meaning is "one who sees with his intelligence" (not having physical sight).

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modest mud-and-straw huts. We halted in front of one of these insignificant temporary dwellings, with a small doorless entrance, the shelter of Kara Patri, a young wandering sadhu noted for his exceptional intelligence. There he sat, cross-legged on a pile of straw, his only covering — and incidentally his only possession — an ochre cloth draped over his shoulders.

"Truly a divine face smiled at us after we had crawled on all fours into the hut and *pranamed* at the feet of this enlightened soul, while the kerosene lantern at the entrance flickered weird, dancing shadows on the thatched walls. His face, especially his eyes and perfect teeth, beamed and glistened. Although I was puzzled by the Hindi, his expressions were very revealing; he was full of enthusiasm, love, spiritual glory. No one could be mistaken as to his greatness.

"Imagine the happy life of one unattached to the material world; free of the clothing problem; free of food craving, never begging, never touching cooked food except on alternate days, never carrying a begging bowl; free of all money entanglements, never handling money, never storing things away, always trusting in God; free of transportation worries, never riding in vehicles, but always walking on the banks of the sacred rivers; not remaining in one place longer than a week in order to avoid any growth of attachment.

"Such a modest soul! unusually learned in the Vedas, and possessing an M.A. degree and the title of *Shastri* (master of scriptures) from Banaras University. A sublime feeling pervaded me as I sat at his feet; it all seemed to be an answer to my desire to see the real, the ancient India, for he is a true representative of this land of spiritual giants."

I questioned Kara Patri about his wandering life. "Don't you have any extra clothes for winter?"

"No, this is enough."

"Do you carry any books?"

"No, I teach from memory those people who wish to hear me."

"What else do you do?"

"I roam by the Ganges."

At these quiet words, I was overpowered by a yearning for the simplicity of his life. I remembered America, and all the responsibilities that lay on my shoulders.

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"No, Yogananda," I thought sadly for a moment, "in this life roaming by the Ganges is not for you."

After the sadhu had told me a few of his spiritual realizations, I shot an abrupt question.

"Are you giving these descriptions from scriptural lore, or from inner experience?"

"Half from book learning," he answered with a straightforward smile, "and half from experience."

We sat happily awhile in meditative silence. After we had left his sacred presence, I said to Mr. Wright, "He is a king sitting on a throne of golden straw."

We had our dinner that night on the *mela* grounds under the stars, eating from leaf plates pinned together with sticks. Dishwashings in India are reduced to a minimum!

Two more days of the fascinating *kumbha*; then northwest along the Yamuna banks to Agra. Once again I gazed on the Taj Mahal; in memory Jitendra stood by my side, awed by the dream in marble. Then on to the Brindaban ashram of Swami Keshabananda.

My object in seeking out Keshabananda was connected with this book. I had never forgotten Sri Yukteswar's request that I write the life of Lahiri Mahasaya. During my stay in India I was taking every opportunity to contact direct disciples and relatives of the Yogavatar. Recording their conversations in voluminous notes, I verified facts and dates, and collected photographs, old letters, and documents. My Lahiri Mahasaya portfolio began to swell; I realized with dismay that ahead of me lay arduous labours in authorship. I prayed that I might be equal to my role as biographer of the colossal guru. Several of his disciples feared that in a written account their master might be belittled or misinterpreted.

"One can hardly do justice in cold words to the life of a divine incarnation," Panchanon Bhattacharya had once remarked to me.

Other close disciples were similarly satisfied to keep the Yogavatar hidden in their hearts as the deathless preceptor. Nevertheless, mindful of Lahiri Mahasaya's prediction about his biography, I spared no effort to secure and substantiate the facts of his outward life.

Swami Keshabananda greeted our party warmly at Brindaban

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in his Katayani Peeth Ashram, an imposing brick building with massive black pillars, set in a beautiful garden. He ushered us at once into a sitting room adorned with an enlargement of Lahiri Mahasaya's picture. The swami was approaching the age of ninety, but his muscular body radiated strength and health. With long hair and a snow-white beard, eyes twinkling with joy, he was a veritable patriarchal embodiment. I informed him that I wanted to mention his name in my book on India's masters.

"Please tell me about your earlier life." I smiled entreatingly; great yogis are often uncommunicative.

Keshabananda made a gesture of humility. "There is little of external moment. Practically my whole life has been spent in the Himalayan solitudes, travelling on foot from one quiet cave to another. For a while I maintained a small ashram outside Hardwar, surrounded on all sides by a grove of tall trees. It was a peaceful spot little visited by travellers, owing to the ubiquity of cobras." Keshabananda chuckled. "Later a Ganges flood washed away the hermitage and cobras alike. My disciples then helped me to build this Brindaban ashram."

One of our party asked the swami how he had protected himself against the Himalayan tigers.

Keshabananda shook his head. "In those high spiritual altitudes," he said, "wild beasts seldom molest the yogis. Once in the jungle I encountered a tiger face-to-face. At my sudden ejaculation, the animal was transfixed as though turned to stone." Again the swami chuckled at his memories.*

"Occasionally I left my seclusion to visit my guru in Banaras. He used to joke with me over my ceaseless travels in the Himalayan wilderness.

"'You have the mark of wanderlust on your foot,' he told me

* There are many methods, it appears, for outwitting a tiger. An Australian explorer, Francis Birtles, has recounted that he found the Indian jungles "varied, beautiful, and safe." His safety charm was flypaper. "Every night I spread a quantity of sheets around my camp and was never disturbed," he explained. "The reason is psychological. The tiger is an animal of great conscious dignity. He prowls around and challenges man until he comes to the flypaper; he then slinks away. No dignified tiger would dare face a human being after squatting down upon a sticky flypaper!"

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once. 'I am glad that the sacred Himalayas are extensive enough to engross you.'

"Many times," Keshabananda went on, "both before and after his passing, Lahiri Mahasaya has appeared bodily before me. For him no Himalayan height is inaccessible!"

Two hours later he led us to a dining patio. I sighed in silent dismay. Another fifteen-course meal! Less than a year of Indian hospitality, and I had gained fifty pounds! Yet it would have been considered the height of rudeness to refuse any of the dishes, carefully prepared for the endless banquets in my honour. In India (nowhere else, alas!) a well-padded swami is considered a delightful sight.

After dinner, Keshabananda led me to a secluded nook.

"Your arrival is not unexpected," he said. "I have a message for you."

I was surprised; no one had known of my plan to visit Keshabananda.

"While roaming last year in the northern Himalayas near Badrinarayan," the swami continued, "I lost my way. Shelter appeared in a spacious cave, which was empty, though the embers of a fire glowed in a hole in the rocky floor. Wondering about the occupant of this lonely retreat, I sat near the fire, my gaze fixed on the sunlit entrance to the cave.

"'Keshabananda, I am glad you are here.' These words came from behind me. I turned, startled, and was dazzled to behold Babaji! The great guru had materialized himself in a recess of the cave. Overjoyed to see him again after many years, I prostrated myself at his holy feet.

"'I called you here,' Babaji went on. 'That is why you lost your way and were led to my temporary abode in this cave. It is a long time since our last meeting; I am pleased to greet you once more.'

"The deathless master blessed me with some words of spiritual help, then added: 'I give you a message for Yogananda. He will pay you a visit on his return to India. Many matters connected with his guru and with the surviving disciples of Lahiri will keep Yogananda fully occupied. Tell him, then, that I won't see him this time, as he is eagerly hoping; but I shall see him on some other occasion.'"

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I was deeply touched to receive from Keshabananda's lips this consoling promise from Babaji. A certain hurt in my heart vanished; I grieved no longer that, even as Sri Yukteswar had hinted, Babaji did not appear at the *Kumbha Mela*.

Spending one night as guests of the ashram, our party set out the following afternoon for Calcutta. Riding over a bridge of the Yamuna River, we enjoyed a magnificent view of the skyline of Brindaban just as the sun set fire to the sky—a veritable furnace of Vulcan in colour, reflected below us in the still waters.

The Yamuna beach is hallowed by memories of the child Sri Krishna. Here he engaged with innocent sweetness in his *lilas* (plays) with the *gopis* (maids), exemplifying the supernal love which ever exists between a divine incarnation and his devotees. The life of Lord Krishna has been misunderstood by many Western commentators. Scriptural allegory is baffling to literal minds. An amusing blunder by a translator will illustrate this point. The story concerns an inspired medieval saint, the cobbler Ravidas, who sang in the simple terms of his own trade of the spiritual glory hidden in all mankind:

> Under the vast vault of blue
> Lives the divinity clothed in hide.

One turns aside to hide a smile on hearing the pedestrian interpretation given to Ravidas's poem by a Western writer:

> "He afterwards built a hut, set up in it an idol which he made from a hide, and applied himself to its worship."

Ravidas was a brother disciple of the great Kabir. One of Ravidas's exalted *chelas* was the Rani of Chitor. She invited a large number of Brahmins to a feast in honour of her teacher, but they refused to eat with a lowly cobbler. As they sat down in dignified aloofness to eat their own uncontaminated meal, lo! each Brahmin found at his side the form of Ravidas. This mass vision accomplished a widespread spiritual revival in Chitor.

In a few days our little group reached Calcutta. Eager to see Sri Yukteswar, I was disappointed to hear that he had left Serampore and was now in Puri, about three hundred miles to the south.

"Come to Puri ashram at once." This telegram was sent on March 8 by a brother disciple to Atul Chandra Roy Chowdhry, one

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of Master's *chelas* in Calcutta. News of the message reached my ears; anguished at its implications, I dropped to my knees and implored God that my guru's life be spared. As I was about to leave Father's home for the train, a divine voice spoke within.

"Do not go to Puri tonight. Thy prayer cannot be granted."

"Lord," I said, grief-stricken, "Thou dost not wish to engage with me in a 'tug-of-war' at Puri, where Thou wilt have to deny my incessant prayers for Master's life. Must he, then, depart for higher duties at Thy behest?"

In obedience to the inner command, I did not leave that night for Puri. The following evening I set out for the train; on the way, at seven o'clock, a black astral cloud suddenly covered the sky.* Later, while the train roared toward Puri, a vision of Sri Yukteswar appeared before me. He was sitting, very grave of countenance, with a light on each side.

"Is it all over?" I lifted my arms beseechingly.

He nodded, then slowly vanished.

As I stood on the Puri train platform the following morning, still hoping against hope, an unknown man approached me.

"Have you heard that your Master is gone?" He left me without another word; I never discovered who he was or how he had known where to find me.

Stunned, I swayed against the platform wall, realizing that in diverse ways my guru was trying to convey to me the devastating news. Seething with rebellion, my soul was like a volcano. By the time I reached the Puri hermitage I was nearing collapse. The inner voice was tenderly repeating: "Collect yourself. Be calm."

I entered the ashram room where Master's body, unimaginably lifelike, was sitting in the lotus posture — a picture of health and loveliness. A short time before his passing, my guru had been slightly ill with fever, but before the day of his ascension into the Infinite, his body had become completely well. No matter how often I looked at his dear form I could not realize that its life had departed. His skin was smooth and soft; in his face was a beatific

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* Sri Yukteswar entered *mahasamadhi* at this hour—7:00 P.M., March 9, 1936.

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expression of tranquillity. He had consciously relinquished his body at the hour of mystic summoning.

"The Lion of Bengal is gone!" I cried in a daze.

I conducted the solemn rites on March 10. Sri Yukteswar was buried* with the ancient rituals of the swamis in the garden of his Puri ashram. His disciples later arrived from far and near to honour their guru at a vernal equinox memorial service. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, leading newspaper of Calcutta, carried his picture and the following report:

> The death *Bhandara* ceremony for Srimat Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri Maharaj, aged 81, took place at Puri on March 21. Many disciples came down to Puri for the rites.
>
> One of the greatest expounders of the Bhagavad Gita, Swami Maharaj was a great disciple of Yogiraj Sri Shyama Charan Lahiri Mahasaya of Banaras. Swami Maharaj was the founder of several Yogoda Satsanga [Self-Realization Fellowship] centres in India, and was the great inspiration behind the yoga movement which was carried to the West by Swami Yogananda, his principal disciple. It was Sri Yukteswarji's prophetic powers and deep realization that inspired Swami Yogananda to cross the oceans and spread in America the message of the masters of India.
>
> His interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita and other scriptures testify to the depth of Sri Yukteswarji's command of the philosophy, both Eastern and Western, and remain as an eye-opener for the unity between Orient and Occident. As he believed in the unity of all religious faiths, Sri Yukteswar Maharaj established Sadhu Sabha (Society of Saints) with the cooperation of leaders of various sects and faiths, for the inculcation of a scientific spirit in religion. At the time of his demise he nominated Swami Yogananda his successor as the president of Sadhu Sabha.
>
> India is really poorer today by the passing of such a great man. May all fortunate enough to have come near him inculcate in themselves the true spirit of India's culture and *sadhana* which was personified in him.

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* Hindu funeral customs require cremation for householders; swamis and monks of other orders are not cremated, but buried. (There are occasional exceptions.) The bodies of monks are symbolically considered to have undergone cremation in the fire of wisdom at the time of taking the monastic vows.

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I returned to Calcutta. Not trusting myself as yet to go to the Serampore hermitage with its sacred memories, I summoned Prafulla, Sri Yukteswar's little disciple in Serampore, and made arrangements for him to enter the Ranchi school.

"The morning you left for the Allahabad *mela*," Prafulla told me, "Master dropped heavily on the davenport.

" 'Yogananda is gone!' he cried. 'Yogananda is gone!' He added cryptically, 'I shall have to tell him some other way.' He sat then for hours in silence."

My days were filled with lectures, classes, interviews, and reunions with old friends. Beneath a hollow smile and a life of ceaseless activity, a stream of black brooding polluted the inner river of bliss which for so many years had meandered under the sands of all my perceptions.

"Where has that divine sage gone?" I cried silently from the depths of a tormented spirit.

No answer came.

"It is best that Master has completed his union with the Cosmic Beloved," my mind assured me. "He is eternally glowing in the dominion of deathlessness."

"Never again may you see him in the old Serampore mansion," my heart lamented. "No longer may you bring your friends to meet him, or proudly say: 'Behold, there sits India's *Jnanavatar*!' "

Mr. Wright made arrangements for our party to sail from Bombay for the West in early June. After a fortnight in May of farewell banquets and speeches in Calcutta, Miss Bletsch, Mr. Wright and I left in the Ford for Bombay. On our arrival, the ship authorities asked us to cancel our passage, as no room could be found for the Ford, which we would need again in Europe.

"Never mind," I said gloomily to Mr. Wright. "I want to return once more to Puri." I silently added, "Let my tears once again water the grave of my guru."

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CHAPTER 43

The Resurrection of Sri Yukteswar

"Lord Krishna!" The glorious form of the avatar appeared in a shimmering blaze as I sat in my room at the Regent Hotel in Bombay. Shining over the roof of a high building across the street, the ineffable vision had suddenly burst on my sight as I gazed out of my tall open third-storey window.

The divine figure waved to me, smiling and nodding in greeting. When I could not understand the exact message of Lord Krishna, he departed with a gesture of blessing. Wondrously uplifted, I felt that some spiritual event was presaged.

My Western voyage had, for the time being, been cancelled. I was scheduled for several public addresses in Bombay before leaving on a return visit to Calcutta and Puri.

Sitting on my bed in the Bombay hotel at three o'clock in the afternoon of June 19, 1936—one week after the vision of Sri Krishna—I was roused from my meditation by a beatific light. Before my open and astonished eyes, the whole room was transformed into a strange world, the sunlight transmuted into supernal splendour.

Waves of rapture engulfed me as I beheld the flesh and blood form of Sri Yukteswar!

"My son!" Master spoke tenderly, on his face an angel-bewitching smile.

For the first time in my life I did not kneel at his feet in

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greeting, but instantly advanced to gather him hungrily in my arms. Moment of moments! The anguish of past months was toll I counted weightless against the torrential bliss now descending.

"Master mine, beloved of my heart, why did you leave me?" I was incoherent in an excess of joy. "Why did you let me go to the *Kumbha Mela*? How bitterly have I blamed myself for leaving you!"

"I did not want to interfere with your happy anticipation of seeing the pilgrimage spot where first I met Babaji. I left you only for a little while; am I not with you again?"

"But is it *you*, Master, the same Lion of God? Are you wearing a body like the one I buried beneath the cruel Puri sands?"

"Yes, my child, I am the same. This is a flesh and blood body. Though I see it as ethereal, to your sight it is physical. From cosmic atoms I created an entirely new body, exactly like that cosmic-dream physical body which you laid beneath the dream-sands at Puri in your dream-world. I am in truth resurrected—not on earth but on an astral planet. Its inhabitants are better able than earthly humanity to meet my lofty standards. There you and your exalted loved ones shall someday come to be with me."

"Deathless guru, tell me more!"

Master gave a quick, mirthful chuckle. "Please, dear one," he said, "won't you relax your hold a little?"

"Only a little!" I had been embracing him with an octopus grip. I could detect the same faint, fragrant, natural odour that had been characteristic of his body before. The thrilling touch of his divine flesh still persists around the inner sides of my arms and in my palms whenever I recall those glorious hours.

"As prophets are sent on earth to help men work out their physical karma, so I have been directed by God to serve on an astral planet as a saviour," Sri Yukteswar explained. "It is called Hiranyaloka or 'Illumined Astral Planet.' There I am aiding advanced beings to rid themselves of astral karma and thus attain liberation from astral rebirths. The dwellers on Hiranyaloka are highly developed spiritually; all of them had acquired, in their last earth-incarnation, the meditation-given power of consciously leaving their physical bodies at death. No one can enter Hiranyaloka

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unless he has passed on earth beyond the state of *sabikalpa samadhi* into the higher state of *nirbikalpa samadhi.**

"Hiranyaloka inhabitants have already passed through the ordinary astral spheres, where nearly all beings from earth must go at death; there they destroyed many seeds of karma connected with their past actions in astral worlds. None but advanced devotees can perform such redemptive work effectively in the astral spheres.† Then, in order to free their souls fully from all traces of astral karma, these aspirants were drawn by cosmic law to be reborn in new astral bodies on Hiranyaloka, the astral sun or heaven, where I am present to help them. There are also nearly perfect beings on Hiranyaloka who have come from the superior causal world."

My mind was now in such perfect attunement with my guru's that he was conveying his word-pictures to me partly by speech and partly by thought transference. I was thus quickly receiving his idea-tabloids.

"You have read in the scriptures," Master went on, "that God encased the human soul successively in three bodies—the idea, or causal, body; the subtle astral body, seat of man's mental and emotional natures; and the gross physical body. On earth a man is equipped with his physical senses. An astral being works with his consciousness and feelings and a body made of lifetrons.‡ A causal-bodied being remains in the blissful realm of ideas. My

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* See p. 238. In *sabikalpa samadhi* the devotee has attained realization of his oneness with Spirit but cannot maintain his cosmic consciousness except in the immobile trance state. By continuous meditation he reaches the superior state of *nirbikalpa samadhi*, in which he may move freely in the world without any loss of God-perception.

In *nirbikalpa samadhi* the yogi dissolves the last vestiges of his material or earthly karma. Nevertheless, he may still have certain astral and causal karma to work out, and therefore takes astral and then causal reembodiments on high-vibrational spheres.

† Because most persons, enjoying the beauty of the astral worlds, do not see any necessity for strenuous spiritual effort.

‡ Sri Yukteswar used the word *prana*; I have translated it as lifetrons. The Hindu scriptures refer not only to the *anu*, "atom," and to the *paramanu*, "beyond the atom," finer electronic energies, but also to *prana*, "creative lifetronic force." Atoms and electrons are blind forces; *prana* is inherently intelligent. The pranic lifetrons in the spermatozoa and ova, for instance, guide the development of the embryo according to a karmic design.

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work is with those astral beings who are preparing to enter the causal world."

"Adorable Master, please tell me more about the astral cosmos." Though I had slightly relaxed my embrace at Sri Yukteswar's request, my arms were still around him. Treasure beyond all treasures, my guru who had laughed at death to reach me!

"There are many astral planets, teeming with astral beings," Master began. "The inhabitants use astral planes, or masses of light, to travel from one planet to another, faster than electricity and radioactive energies.

"The astral universe, made of various subtle vibrations of light and colour, is hundreds of times larger than the material cosmos. The entire physical creation hangs like a little solid basket under the huge luminous balloon of the astral sphere. Just as many physical suns and stars roam in space, so there are also countless astral solar and stellar systems. Their planets have astral suns and moons, more beautiful than the physical ones. The astral luminaries resemble the aurora borealis—the sunny astral aurora being more dazzling than the mild-rayed moon-aurora. The astral day and night are longer than those of earth.

"The astral world is infinitely beautiful, clean, pure, and orderly. There are no dead planets or barren lands. The terrestrial blemishes—weeds, bacteria, insects, snakes—are absent. Unlike the variable climates and seasons of the earth, the astral planets maintain the even temperature of an eternal spring, with occasional luminous white snow and rain of many-coloured lights. Astral planets abound in opal lakes and bright seas and rainbow rivers.

"The ordinary astral universe—not the subtler astral heaven of Hiranyaloka—is peopled with millions of astral beings who have come, more or less recently, from the earth, and also with myriads of fairies, mermaids, fishes, animals, goblins, gnomes, demigods and spirits, all residing on different astral planets in accordance with karmic qualifications. Various spheric mansions or vibratory regions are provided for good and evil spirits. Good ones can travel freely, but the evil spirits are confined to limited zones. In the same way that human beings live on the surface of the earth, worms inside the soil, fish in water, and birds in air, so astral beings of different grades

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are assigned to suitable vibratory quarters.

"Among the fallen dark angels, expelled from other worlds, friction and war take place with lifetronic bombs or mental mantric* vibratory rays. These beings dwell in the gloom-drenched regions of the lower astral cosmos, working out their evil karma.

"In the vast realms above the dark astral prison, all is shining and beautiful. The astral cosmos is more naturally attuned than the earth to the divine will and plan of perfection. Every astral object is manifested primarily by the will of God, and partially by the will-call of astral beings. They possess the power of modifying or enhancing the grace and form of anything already created by the Lord. He has given His astral children the freedom and privilege of changing or improving at will the astral cosmos. On earth a solid must be transformed into liquid or other form through natural or chemical processes, but astral solids are changed into astral liquids, gases, or energy solely and instantly by the will of the inhabitants.

"The earth is dark with warfare and murder in the sea, land, and air," my guru continued, "but the astral realms know a happy harmony and equality. Astral beings dematerialize or materialize their forms at will. Flowers or fish or animals can metamorphose themselves, for a time, into astral men. All astral beings are free to assume any form, and can easily commune together. No fixed, definite, natural law hems them round—any astral tree, for example, can be successfully asked to produce an astral mango or other desired fruit, flower, or indeed any other object. Certain karmic restrictions are present, but there are no distinctions in the astral world about desirability of various forms. Everything is vibrant with God's creative light.

"No one is born of woman; offspring are materialized by astral beings through the help of their cosmic will into specially patterned, astrally condensed forms. The recently physically disembodied

* Adjective of *mantra*, chanted seed-sounds discharged by the mental gun of concentration. The *Puranas* (ancient *shastras* or treatises) describe these mantric wars between *devas* and *asuras* (gods and demons). An *asura* once tried to slay a *deva* with a potent chant. Because of mispronunciation the mental bomb acted as a boomerang and killed the demon.

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being arrives in an astral family through invitation, drawn by similar mental and spiritual tendencies.

"The astral body is not subject to cold or heat or other natural conditions. The anatomy includes an astral brain, or the thousand-petalled lotus of light, and six awakened centres in the *sushumna*, or astral cerebrospinal axis. The heart draws cosmic energy as well as light from the astral brain, and pumps it to the astral nerves and body cells, or lifetrons. Astral beings are able to effect changes in their forms by lifetronic force and by holy mantric vibrations.

"In most cases the astral body is an exact counterpart of the last physical form. The face and figure of an astral person resemble those of his youth in his previous earthly sojourn. Occasionally someone, like myself, chooses to retain his old-age appearance." Master, emanating the very essence of youth, chuckled merrily.

"Unlike the spacial, three-dimensional physical world cognized only by the five senses, the astral spheres are visible to the all-inclusive sixth sense—intuition," Sri Yukteswar went on. "By sheer intuitional feeling, all astral beings see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. They possess three eyes, two of which are partly closed. The third and chief astral eye, vertically placed on the forehead, is open. Astral beings have all the outer sensory organs—ears, eyes, nose, tongue, and skin—but they employ the intuitional sense to experience sensations through any part of the body; they can see through the ear, or nose, or skin. They are able to hear through the eyes or tongue, and can taste through the ears or skin, and so forth.*

"Man's physical body is exposed to countless dangers, and is easily hurt or maimed; the ethereal astral body may occasionally be cut or bruised but is healed at once by mere willing."

"Gurudeva, are all astral persons beautiful?"

"Beauty in the astral world is known to be a spiritual quality, and not an outward conformation," Sri Yukteswar replied. "Astral beings therefore attach little importance to facial features. They have the privilege, however, of costuming themselves at will with

* Examples of such powers are not wanting even on earth, as in the case of Helen Keller and other rare beings.

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new, colourful, astrally materialized bodies. Just as worldly men don new array for gala events, so astral beings find occasions to bedeck themselves in specially designed forms.

"Joyous astral festivities on the higher astral planets like Hiranyaloka take place when a being is liberated from the astral world through spiritual advancement, and is therefore ready to enter the heaven of the causal world. On such occasions the Invisible Heavenly Father, and the saints who are merged in Him, materialize Themselves into bodies of Their own choice and join the astral celebration. In order to please His beloved devotee, the Lord takes any desired form. If the devotee worshipped through devotion, he sees God as the Divine Mother. To Jesus, the Father-aspect of the Infinite One was appealing beyond other conceptions. The individuality with which the Creator has endowed each of His creatures makes every conceivable and inconceivable demand on the Lord's versatility!" My guru and I laughed happily together.

"Friends of other lives easily recognize one another in the astral world," Sri Yukteswar went on in his beautiful, flutelike voice. "Rejoicing at the immortality of friendship, they realize the indestructibility of love, often doubted at the time of the sad, delusive partings of earthly life.

"The intuition of astral beings pierces through the veil and observes human activities on earth, but man cannot view the astral world unless his sixth sense is somewhat developed. Thousands of earth-dwellers have momentarily glimpsed an astral being or an astral world.*

"The advanced beings on Hiranyaloka remain mostly awake in ecstasy during the long astral day and night, helping to work out intricate problems of cosmic government and the redemption of prodigal sons, earthbound souls. When the Hiranyaloka beings sleep, they have occasional dreamlike astral visions. Their minds are usually engrossed in the conscious state of highest *nirbikalpa* bliss.

* On earth pure-minded children are sometimes able to see the graceful astral bodies of fairies. Through drugs or intoxicating drink, whose use is forbidden by all scriptures, a man may so derange his consciousness that he perceives the hideous forms in astral hells.

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"Inhabitants in all parts of the astral worlds are still subject to mental agonies. The sensitive minds of the higher beings on planets like Hiranyaloka feel keen pain if any mistake is made in conduct or perception of truth. These advanced beings endeavour to attune their every act and thought with the perfection of spiritual law.

"Communication among the astral inhabitants is held entirely by astral telepathy and television; there is none of the confusion and misunderstanding of the written and spoken word which earth-dwellers must endure. Just as persons on the cinema screen appear to move and act through a series of light pictures, and do not actually breathe, so the astral beings walk and work as intelligently guided and coordinated images of light, without the necessity of drawing power from oxygen. Man depends upon solids, liquids, gases, and energy for sustenance; astral beings sustain themselves principally by cosmic light."

"Master mine, do astral beings eat anything?" I was drinking in his marvellous elucidations with the receptivity of all my faculties—mind, heart, soul. Superconscious perceptions of truth are permanently real and changeless, while fleeting sense experiences and impressions are never more than temporarily or relatively true, and soon lose in memory all their vividness. My guru's words were so penetratingly imprinted on the parchment of my being that at any time, by transferring my mind to the superconscious state, I can clearly relive the divine experience.

"Luminous raylike vegetables abound in the astral soils," he answered. "The astral beings consume vegetables, and drink a nectar flowing from glorious fountains of light and from astral brooks and rivers. Just as invisible images of persons on the earth can be dug out of the ether and made visible by a television apparatus, later being dismissed again into space, so the God-created, unseen astral blueprints of vegetables and plants floating in the ether are precipitated on an astral planet by the will of its inhabitants. In the same way, from the wildest fancy of these beings, whole gardens of fragrant flowers are materialized, returning later to the etheric invisibility. Although dwellers on the heavenly planets like Hiranyaloka are almost freed from any necessity of eating, still higher is the unconditioned existence of almost completely liberated

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souls in the causal world, who eat nothing save the manna of bliss.

"The earth-liberated astral being meets a multitude of relatives, fathers, mothers, wives, husbands, and friends, acquired during different incarnations on earth,* as they appear from time to time in various parts of the astral realms. He is therefore at a loss to understand whom to love especially; he learns in this way to give a divine and equal love to all, as children and individualized expressions of God. Though the outward appearance of loved ones may have changed, more or less according to the development of new qualities in the latest life of any particular soul, the astral being employs his unerring intuition to recognize all those once dear to him in other planes of existence, and to welcome them to their new astral home. Because every atom in creation is inextinguishably dowered with individuality,† an astral friend will be recognized no matter what costume he may don, even as on earth an actor's identity is discoverable by close observation despite any disguise.

"The span of life in the astral world is much longer than on earth. A normal advanced astral being's average life period is from five hundred to one thousand years, measured in accordance with earthly standards of time. As certain redwood trees outlive most trees by millenniums, or as some yogis live several hundred years though most men die before the age of sixty, so some astral beings live much longer than the usual span of astral existence. Visitors to the astral world dwell there for a longer or shorter period in accordance with the weight of their physical karma, which draws them back to earth within a specified time.

"The astral being does not have to contend painfully with death at the time of shedding his luminous body. Many of these beings nevertheless feel slightly nervous at the thought of dropping their astral form for the subtler causal one. The astral world is free from

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* Lord Buddha was once asked why a man should love all persons equally. "Because," the great teacher replied, "in the very numerous and varied life-spans of each man, every other being has at one time or another been dear to him."

† The eight elemental qualities that enter into all created life, from atom to man, are earth, water, fire, air, ether, sensory mind (*manas*), intelligence (*buddhi*), and individuality or ego (*ahamkara*). (Cf. Bhagavad Gita: VII:4.)

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unwilling death, disease, and old age. These three dreads are the curse of earth, where man has allowed his consciousness to identify itself almost wholly with a frail physical body requiring constant aid from air, food, and sleep in order to exist at all.

"Physical death is attended by the disappearance of breath and the disintegration of fleshly cells. Astral death consists of the dispersement of lifetrons, those manifest units of energy which constitute the life of astral beings. At physical death a being loses his consciousness of flesh and becomes aware of his subtle body in the astral world. Experiencing astral death in due time, a being thus passes from the consciousness of astral birth and death to that of physical birth and death. These recurrent cycles of astral and physical encasement are the ineluctable destiny of all unenlightened beings. Scriptural definitions of heaven and hell sometimes stir man's deeper-than-subconscious memories of his long series of experiences in the blithesome astral and disappointing terrestrial worlds."

"Beloved Master," I asked, "will you please describe more in detail the difference between rebirth on the earth and in the astral and causal spheres?"

"Man as an individualized soul is essentially causal-bodied," my guru explained. "That body is a matrix of the thirty-five *ideas* required by God as the basic or causal thought forces from which He later formed the subtle astral body of nineteen elements and the gross physical body of sixteen elements.

"The nineteen elements of the astral body are mental, emotional, and lifetronic. The nineteen components are intelligence; ego; feeling; mind (sense-consciousness); five instruments of *knowledge*, the subtle counterparts of the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch; five instruments of *action*, the mental correspondence for the executive abilities to procreate, excrete, talk, walk, and exercise manual skill; and five instruments of *life force*, those empowered to perform the crystallizing, assimilating, eliminating, metabolizing, and circulating functions of the body. This subtle astral encasement of nineteen elements survives the death of the physical body, which is made of sixteen gross chemical elements.

"God thought out different ideas within Himself and projected

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them into dreams. Lady Cosmic Dream thus sprang out decorated in all her colossal endless ornaments of relativity.

"In thirty-five thought categories of the causal body, God elaborated all the complexities of man's nineteen astral and sixteen physical counterparts. By condensation of vibratory forces, first subtle, then gross, He produced man's astral body and finally his physical form. According to the law of relativity, by which the Prime Simplicity has become the bewildering manifold, the causal cosmos and causal body are different from the astral cosmos and astral body; the physical cosmos and physical body are likewise characteristically at variance with the other forms of creation.

"The fleshly body is made of the fixed, objectified dreams of the Creator. The dualities are ever present on earth: disease and health, pain and pleasure, loss and gain. Human beings find limitation and resistance in three-dimensional matter. When man's desire to live is severely shaken by disease or other causes, death arrives; the heavy overcoat of the flesh is temporarily shed. The soul, however, remains encased in the astral and causal bodies.* The cohesive force by which all three bodies are held together is desire. The power of unfulfilled desires is the root of all of man's slavery.

"Physical desires are rooted in egotism and sense pleasures. The compulsion or temptation of sensory experience is more powerful than the desire-force connected with astral attachments or causal perceptions.

"Astral desires centre around enjoyment in terms of vibration. Astral beings enjoy the ethereal music of the spheres and are entranced by the sight of all creation as exhaustless expressions of changing light. The astral beings also smell, taste, and touch light. Astral desires are thus connected with an astral being's power to precipitate all objects and experiences as forms of light or as condensed thoughts or dreams.

"Causal desires are fulfilled by perception only. The nearly-free beings who are encased only in the causal body see the whole uni-

* "Body" signifies any soul encasement, whether gross or subtle. The three bodies are cages for the Bird of Paradise.

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verse as realizations of the dream-ideas of God; they can materialize anything and everything in sheer thought. Causal beings therefore consider the enjoyment of physical sensations or astral delights as gross and suffocating to the soul's fine sensibilities. Causal beings work out their desires by materializing them instantly.* Those who find themselves covered only by the delicate veil of the causal body can bring universes into manifestation even as the Creator. Because all creation is made of the cosmic dream-texture, the soul thinly clothed in the causal has vast realizations of power.

"A soul, being invisible by nature, can be distinguished only by the presence of its body or bodies. The mere presence of a body signifies that its existence is made possible by unfulfilled desires.†

"So long as the soul of man is encased in one, two, or three body-containers, sealed tightly with the corks of ignorance and desires, he cannot merge with the sea of Spirit. When the gross physical receptacle is destroyed by the hammer of death, the other two coverings—astral and causal—still remain to prevent the soul from consciously joining the Omnipresent Life. When desirelessness is attained through wisdom, its power disintegrates the two remaining vessels. The tiny human soul emerges, free at last; it is one with the Measureless Amplitude."

I asked my divine guru to shed further light on the high and mysterious causal world.

"The causal world is indescribably subtle," he replied. "In order to understand it, one would have to possess such tremendous powers of concentration that he could close his eyes and visualize the astral cosmos and the physical cosmos in all their vastness—the luminous balloon with the solid basket—as existing in ideas only. If by this superhuman concentration one succeeded in converting or resolving

* Even as Babaji helped Lahiri Mahasaya to rid himself of a subconscious desire from some past life for a palace, as described in chapter 34.

† "And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."—*Luke* 17:37 (Bible). Wherever the soul is encased in the physical body or in the astral body or in the causal body, there the eagles of desires—which prey on human sense weaknesses, or on astral and causal attachments—will also gather to keep the soul a prisoner.

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the two cosmoses with all their complexities into sheer ideas, he would then reach the causal world and stand on the borderline of fusion between mind and matter. There one perceives all created things—solids, liquids, gases, electricity, energy, all beings, gods, men, animals, plants, bacteria—as forms of consciousness, just as a man can close his eyes and realise that he exists, even though his body is invisible to his physical eyes and is present only as an idea.

"Whatever a human being can do in fancy, a causal being can do in reality. The most colossal imaginative human intelligence is able, in mind only, to range from one extreme of thought to another, to skip mentally from planet to planet, or tumble endlessly down a pit of eternity, or soar rocketlike into the galaxied canopy, or scintillate like a searchlight over milky ways and the starry spaces. But beings in the causal world have a much greater freedom, and can effortlessly manifest their thoughts into instant objectivity, without any material or astral obstruction or karmic limitation.

"Causal beings realize that the physical cosmos is not primarily constructed of electrons, nor is the astral cosmos basically composed of lifetrons—both in reality are created from the minutest particles of God-thought, chopped and divided by *maya*, the law of relativity that apparently intervenes to separate creation from its Creator.

"Souls in the causal world recognize one another as individualized points of joyous Spirit; their thought-things are the only objects that surround them. Causal beings see the difference between their bodies and thoughts to be merely ideas. As a man, closing his eyes, can visualize a dazzling white light or a faint blue haze, so causal beings by thought alone are able to see, hear, smell, taste, touch; they create anything, or dissolve it, by the power of cosmic mind.

"Both death and rebirth in the causal world are in thought. Causal-bodied beings feast only on the ambrosia of eternally new knowledge. They drink from the springs of peace, roam on the trackless soil of perceptions, swim in the ocean-endlessness of bliss. Lo! see their bright thought-bodies zoom past trillions of Spirit-created planets, fresh bubbles of universes, wisdom-stars, spectral dreams of golden nebulae on the skyey bosom of Infinity!

"Many beings remain for thousands of years in the causal cosmos. By deeper ecstasies the freed soul then withdraws itself

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from the little causal body and puts on the vastness of the causal cosmos. All the separate eddies of ideas, particularised waves of power, love, will, joy, peace, intuition, calmness, self-control, and concentration melt into the ever-joyous Sea of Bliss. No longer does the soul have to experience its joy as an individualized wave of consciousness, but is merged in the One Cosmic Ocean, with all its waves—eternal laughter, thrills, throbs.

"When a soul is out of the cocoon of the three bodies it escapes forever from the law of relativity and becomes the ineffable Ever-Existent.* Behold the butterfly of Omnipresence, its wings etched with stars and moons and suns! The soul expanded into Spirit remains alone in the region of lightless light, darkless dark, thoughtless thought, intoxicated with its ecstasy of joy in God's dream of cosmic creation."

"A free soul!" I ejaculated in awe.

"When a soul finally gets out of the three jars of bodily delusions," Master continued, "it becomes one with the Infinite without any loss of individuality. Christ had won this final freedom even before he was born as Jesus. In three stages of his past, symbolized in his earth-life as the three days of his experience of death and resurrection, he had attained the power to fully arise in Spirit.

"The undeveloped man must undergo countless earthly and astral and causal incarnations in order to emerge from his three bodies. A master who achieves this final freedom may elect to return to earth as a prophet to bring other human beings back to God, or like myself he may choose to reside in the astral cosmos. There a saviour assumes some of the burden of the inhabitants' karma† and thus helps them to terminate their cycle of reincarnation in the astral cosmos and go on permanently to the causal spheres. Or a freed soul

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* "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out (i.e., shall reincarnate no more)....To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."—*Revelation* 3:12, 21 (Bible).

† Sri Yukteswar was signifying that, even as in his earthly incarnation he had occasionally assumed the weight of disease to lighten his disciples' karma, so in the astral world his mission as a saviour enabled him to take on certain astral karma of dwellers on Hiranyaloka, and thus hasten their evolution into the higher causal world.

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may enter the causal world to aid its beings to shorten their span in the causal body and thus attain the Absolute Freedom."

"Resurrected One, I want to know more about the karma which forces souls to return to the three worlds." I could listen forever, I thought, to my omniscient Master. Never in his earth-life had I been able at one time to assimilate so much of his wisdom. Now for the first time I was receiving a clear, definite insight into the enigmatic interspaces on the checkerboard of life and death.

"The physical karma or desires of man must be completely worked out before his continued stay in astral worlds becomes possible," my guru elucidated in his thrilling voice. "Two kinds of beings live in the astral spheres. Those who still have earthly karma to dispose of and who must therefore reinhabit a gross physical body in order to pay their karmic debts could be classified, after physical death, as temporary visitors to the astral world rather than as established residents.

"Beings with unredeemed earthly karma are not permitted after astral death to go to the high causal sphere of cosmic ideas, but must shuttle to and fro from the physical and astral worlds only, conscious successively of their physical body of sixteen gross elements, and of their astral body of nineteen subtle elements. After each loss of his physical body, however, an undeveloped being from the earth remains for the most part in the deep stupor of the death-sleep and is hardly conscious of the beautiful astral sphere. After the astral rest, such a man returns to the material plane for further lessons, gradually accustoming himself, through repeated journeys, to the worlds of subtle astral texture.

"Normal or long-established residents of the astral universe, on the other hand, are those who, freed forever from all material longings, need return no more to the gross vibrations of earth. Such beings have only astral and causal karma to work out. At astral death these beings pass to the infinitely finer and more delicate causal world. At the end of a certain span, determined by cosmic law, these advanced beings then return to Hiranyaloka or a similar high astral planet, reborn in a new astral body to work out their unredeemed astral karma.

"My son, you may now comprehend more fully that I am

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resurrected by divine decree," Sri Yukteswar continued, "as a saviour of astrally reincarnating souls coming back from the causal sphere, in particular, rather than of those astral beings who are coming up from the earth. Those from the earth, if they still retain vestiges of material karma, do not rise to the very high astral planets like Hiranyaloka.

"Just as most people on earth have not learned through meditation-acquired vision to appreciate the superior joys and advantages of astral life and thus, after death, desire to return to the limited, imperfect pleasures of earth, so many astral beings, during the normal disintegration of their astral bodies, fail to picture the advanced state of spiritual joy in the causal world and, dwelling on thoughts of the more gross and gaudy astral happiness, yearn to revisit the astral paradise. Heavy astral karma must be redeemed by such beings before they can achieve after astral death an unbroken stay in the causal thought-world, so thinly partitioned from the Creator.

"Only when a being has no further desires for experiences in the pleasing-to-the-eye astral cosmos, and cannot be tempted to go back there, does he remain in the causal world. Completing there the work of redeeming all causal karma or seeds of past desires, the confined soul thrusts out the last of the three corks of ignorance and, emerging from the final jar of the causal body, commingles with the Eternal.

"Now do you understand?" Master smiled so enchantingly!

"Yes, through your grace. I am speechless with joy and gratitude."

Never from song or story had I ever received such inspiring knowledge. Though the Hindu scriptures refer to the causal and astral worlds and to man's three bodies, how remote and meaningless those pages compared with the warm authenticity of my resurrected Master! For him indeed existed not a single "undiscover'd country from whose bourn no traveller returns"![*]

"The interpenetration of man's three bodies is expressed in many ways through his threefold nature," my great guru went on.

[*] *Hamlet* (Act III, Scene 1).

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"In the wakeful state on earth a human being is conscious more or less of his three vehicles. When he is sensuously intent on tasting, smelling, touching, listening, or seeing, he is working principally through his physical body. Visualizing or willing, he is working mainly through his astral body. His causal being finds expression when man is thinking or diving deep in introspection or meditation; the cosmical thoughts of genius come to the man who habitually contacts his causal body. In this sense an individual may be classified broadly as 'a material man,' 'an energetic man,' or 'an intellectual man.'

"A man identifies himself about sixteen hours daily with his physical vehicle. Then he sleeps; if he dreams, he remains in his astral body, effortlessly creating any object even as do the astral beings. If man's sleep be deep and dreamless, for several hours he is able to transfer his consciousness, or sense of I-ness, to the causal body; such sleep is revivifying. A dreamer is contacting his astral and not his causal body; his sleep is not fully refreshing."

I had been lovingly observing Sri Yukteswar while he gave his wondrous exposition.

"Angelic Guru," I said, "your body looks exactly as it did when last I wept over it in the Puri ashram."

"Oh, yes, my new body is a perfect copy of the old one. I materialize or dematerialize this form any time at will, much more frequently than I did while on earth. By quick dematerialization, I now travel instantly by light express from planet to planet or, indeed, from astral to causal or to physical cosmos." My divine guru smiled. "Though you move about so fast these days, I had no difficulty in finding you at Bombay!"

"O Master, I was grieving so deeply about your death!"

"Ah, wherein did I die? Isn't there some contradiction?" Sri Yukteswar's eyes were twinkling with love and amusement.

"You were only dreaming on earth; on that earth you saw my dream-body," he went on. "Later you buried that dream-image. Now my finer fleshly body—which you behold and are even now embracing rather closely!—is resurrected on another finer dream-planet of God. Someday that finer dream-body and finer dream-planet will pass away; they too are not forever. All dream-bubbles

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must eventually burst at a final wakeful touch. Differentiate, my son Yogananda, between dreams and Reality!"

This idea of Vedantic* resurrection struck me with wonder. I was ashamed that I had pitied Master when I had seen his lifeless body at Puri. I comprehended at last that my guru had always been fully awake in God, perceiving his own life and passing on earth, and his present resurrection, as nothing more than relativities of divine ideas in the cosmic dream.

"I have now told you, Yogananda, the truths of my life, death, and resurrection. Grieve not for me; rather broadcast everywhere the story of my resurrection from the God-dreamed earth of men to another God-dreamed planet of astrally garbed souls! New hope will be infused into the hearts of misery-mad, death-fearing dreamers of the world."

"Yes, Master!" How willingly would I share with others my joy at his resurrection!

"On earth my standards were uncomfortably high, unsuited to the natures of most men. Often I scolded you more than I should have. You passed my test; your love shone through the clouds of all reprimands." He added tenderly, "I have also come today to tell you: Never again shall I wear the stern gaze of censure. I shall scold you no more."

How much I had missed the chastisements of my great guru! Each one had been a guardian angel of protection.

"Dearest Master! Rebuke me a million times — do scold me now!"

"I shall chide you no more." His divine voice was grave, yet with an undercurrent of laughter. "You and I shall smile together, so long as our two forms appear different in the *maya*-dream of God. Finally we shall merge as one in the Cosmic Beloved; our smiles shall be His smile, our unified song of joy vibrating throughout eternity to be broadcast to God-tuned souls!"

Sri Yukteswar gave me light on certain matters which I cannot

* Life and death as relativities of thought only. *Vedanta* points out that God is the only Reality; all creation or separate existence is *maya* or illusion. This philosophy of monism received its highest expression in the *Upanishad* commentaries of Shankara.

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reveal here. During the two hours that he spent with me in the Bombay hotel room he answered my every question. A number of world prophecies uttered by him that June day in 1936 have already come to pass.

"I leave you now, beloved one!" At these words I felt Master melting away within my encircling arms.

"My child," his voice rang out, vibrating into my very soul-firmament, "whenever you enter the door of *nirbikalpa samadhi* and call on me, I shall come to you in flesh and blood, even as today."

With this celestial promise Sri Yukteswar vanished from my sight. A cloud-voice repeated in musical thunder: "Tell all! Whosoever knows by *nirbikalpa* realization that your earth is a dream of God can come to the finer dream-created planet of Hiranyaloka, and there find me resurrected in a body exactly like my earthly one. Yogananda, tell all!"

Gone was the sorrow of parting. The pity and grief for his death, long robber of my peace, now fled in stark shame. Bliss poured forth like a fountain through endless, newly opened soul pores. Anciently clogged with disuse, they now widened in purity at the driving flood of ecstasy. My former incarnations appeared before my inward eye in motion-picturelike sequence. Good and bad karma of the past was dissolved in the cosmic light shed around me by Master's divine visit.

In this chapter of my autobiography I have obeyed my guru's behest and spread the glad tidings, though they confound once more an incurious generation. Grovelling, man knows well; despair is seldom alien; yet these are perversities, no part of man's true lot. The day he wills, he is set on the path to freedom. Too long has he hearkened to the dank pessimism of his "dust-thou-art" counsellors, heedless of the unconquerable soul.

I was not the only one privileged to behold the Resurrected Guru.

One of Sri Yukteswar's *chelas* was an aged woman, affectionately known as *Ma* (Mother), whose home was close to the Puri hermitage. Master had often stopped to chat with her during his morning walk. On the evening of March 16, 1936, Ma arrived at the ashram and asked to see her guru.

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"Why, Master died a week ago!" Swami Sebananda, now in charge of the Puri hermitage, looked at her sadly.

"That's impossible!" she protested with a smile.

"No." Sebananda recounted details of the burial. "Come," he said, "I will take you to the front garden to his grave."

Ma shook her head. "There is no grave for him! This morning at ten o'clock he passed in his usual walk before my door! I talked to him for several minutes in the bright outdoors.

"'Come this evening to the ashram,' he said.

"I am here! Blessings pour on this old grey head! The deathless guru wanted me to understand in what transcendent body he visited me this morning!"

The astounded Sebananda knelt before her.

"Ma," he said, "what a weight of grief you lift from my heart! He is risen!"

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CHAPTER 44

With Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha

"Welcome to Wardha!" Mahadev Desai, secretary to Mahatma Gandhi, greeted Miss Bletsch, Mr. Wright, and me with these cordial words and the gift of wreaths of *khaddar* (homespun cotton). Our little group had just arrived at the station in Wardha on an early morning in August, glad to leave the dust and heat of the train. Consigning our luggage to a bullock cart, we entered an open motorcar with Mr. Desai and his companions: Babasaheb Deshmukh and Dr. Pingale. A short drive over the muddy country roads brought us to "Maganvadi," the ashram of India's political saint.

Mr. Desai led us at once to the writing room where, cross-legged, sat Mahatma Gandhi. Pen in one hand and a scrap of paper in the other, on his face a vast, winning, warmhearted smile!

"Welcome!" he scribbled in Hindi; it was a Monday, his weekly day of silence.

Though this was our first meeting, we beamed on each other affectionately. In 1925 Mahatma Gandhi had honoured the Ranchi school by a visit, and had inscribed in its guest book a gracious tribute.

The tiny 100-pound saint radiated physical, mental, and spiritual health. His soft brown eyes shone with intelligence, sincerity, and discrimination; this statesman has matched wits and emerged the victor in a thousand legal, social, and political battles. No other leader in the world has attained the secure niche in the hearts of his

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people that Gandhi occupies for India's unlettered millions. Their spontaneous tribute is his famous title — Mahatma, "great soul." For them alone Gandhi confines his attire to the widely cartooned loincloth, symbol of his oneness with the downtrodden masses who can afford no more.

"The ashram residents are wholly at your disposal; please call on them for any service." With characteristic courtesy, the Mahatma handed me this hastily written note as Mr. Desai led our party from the writing room toward the guest house.

Our guide led us through orchards and flowering fields to a tile-roofed building with latticed windows. A front-yard well, twenty-five feet across, was used, Mr. Desai said, for watering stock; nearby stood a revolving cement wheel for threshing rice. Each of our small bedrooms proved to contain only the irreducible minimum — a bed, handmade of rope. The whitewashed kitchen boasted a faucet in one corner and a fire pit for cooking in another. Simple Arcadian sounds reached our ears — the cries of crows and sparrows, the lowing of cattle, and the rap of chisels being used to chip stones.

Observing Mr. Wright's travel diary, Mr. Desai opened it and wrote on a page a list of *Satyagraha** vows taken by all of the Mahatma's earnest followers (*satyagrahis*):

> "Nonviolence; Truth; Non-Stealing; Celibacy; Non-Possession; Body Labour; Control of the Palate; Fearlessness; Equal Respect for all Religions; *Swadeshi* (use of home manufactures); Freedom from Untouchability. These eleven should be observed as vows in a spirit of humility."

(Gandhi himself signed this page on the following day, giving the date also — August 27, 1935.)

Two hours after our arrival my companions and I were summoned to lunch. The Mahatma was already seated under the arcade of the ashram porch, across the courtyard from his study. About twenty-five barefooted *satyagrahis* were squatting before brass cups and plates. A community chorus of prayer; then a meal

* The literal translation from Sanskrit is "holding to truth." *Satyagraha* is the famous nonviolence movement led by Gandhi.

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served from large brass pots containing *chapatis* (whole-wheat unleavened bread) sprinkled with *ghee; talsari* (boiled and diced vegetables), and a lemon jam.

The Mahatma ate *chapatis*, boiled beets, some raw vegetables, and oranges. On the side of his plate was a large lump of very bitter *neem* leaves, a notable blood cleanser. With a spoon he separated a portion and placed it on my dish. I bolted it down with water, remembering childhood days when Mother had forced me to swallow the unpleasant dose. Gandhi, however, was eating the *neem* paste bit by bit without distaste.

In this trifling incident I noted the Mahatma's ability to detach his mind from the senses at will. I recalled a much-publicised appendectomy performed on him some years ago. Refusing anaesthetics, the saint had chatted cheerfully with his devotees throughout the operation, his calm smile revealing his unawareness of pain.

The afternoon brought me an opportunity for a chat with Gandhi's noted disciple, daughter of an English admiral, Miss Madeleine Slade, now called Mira Behn.* Her strong, calm face lit with enthusiasm as she told me, in flawless Hindi, of her daily activities.

"Rural reconstruction work is rewarding! A group of us go every morning at five o'clock to serve the nearby villagers and teach them simple hygiene. We make it a point to clean their latrines and thatched mud huts. The villagers are illiterate; they cannot be educated except by example!" She laughed gaily.

I looked in admiration at this highborn Englishwoman whose true Christian humility enables her to do the scavengering work usually performed only by "untouchables."

"I came to India in 1925," she told me. "In this land I feel that

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* She has published a number of letters written by the Mahatma that reveal the self-disciplinary training given her by her guru (*Gandhi's Letters to a Disciple*; Harper & Bros., New York, 1950).

In a later book (*The Spirit's Pilgrimage*; Coward-McCann, New York, 1960), Miss Slade mentioned the large number of persons who visited Gandhi in Wardha. She wrote: "At this distance of time I cannot recall many of them, but two remain clearly in my mind: Halide Edib Hanum, the celebrated woman writer of Turkey; and Swami Yogananda, founder of Self-Realization Fellowship of America." *(Publisher's Note)*

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I have 'come back home.' Now I would never be willing to return to my old life and old interests."

We discussed America for a while. "I am always pleased and amazed," she said, "to see the deep interest in spiritual subjects shown by many of the Americans who visit India."*

Mira Behn's hands were soon busy at a *charka* (spinning wheel). Owing to the Mahatma's efforts, *charkas* are now omnipresent in rural India.

Gandhi has sound economic and cultural reasons for encouraging the revival of cottage industries, but he does not counsel a fanatical repudiation of all modern progress. Machinery, trains, automobiles, the telegraph have played important parts in his own colossal life! Fifty years of public service, in prison and out, wrestling daily with practical details and harsh realities in the political world, have only increased his balance, open-mindedness, sanity, and humorous appreciation of the quaint human spectacle.

Our trio enjoyed a six o'clock supper as guests of Babasaheb Deshmukh. The seven p.m. prayer hour found us back at Maganvadi ashram, climbing to the roof where thirty *satyagrahis* were grouped in a semicircle around Gandhi. He was squatting on a straw mat, an ancient pocket watch propped up before him. The fading sun cast a last gleam over the palms and banyans; the hum of night and the crickets had started. The atmosphere was serenity itself; I was enraptured.

A solemn chant led by Mr. Desai, with responses from the group; then a Gita reading. The Mahatma motioned to me to give the concluding prayer. Such divine unison of thought and aspiration! A memory forever: the Wardha rooftop meditation under the early stars.

Punctually at eight o'clock Gandhi ended his silence. The herculean labours of his life require him to apportion his time minutely.

* Miss Slade reminded me of another distinguished Western woman, Miss Margaret Woodrow Wilson, eldest daughter of America's great president. I met her in New York; she was intensely interested in India. Later she went to Pondicherry, where she spent the last five years of her life, happily pursuing a path of discipline at the feet of the illumined master, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh.

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"Welcome, Swamiji!" The Mahatma's greeting this time was not via paper. We had just descended from the roof to his writing room, simply furnished with square mats (no chairs), a low desk with books, papers, and a few ordinary pens (not fountain pens); a nondescript clock ticked in a corner. An all-pervasive aura of peace and devotion. Gandhi was bestowing one of his captivating, cavernous, almost toothless smiles.

"Years ago," he explained, "I started my weekly observance of a day of silence as a means for gaining time to look after my correspondence. But now those twenty-four hours have become a vital spiritual need. A periodical decree of silence is not a torture but a blessing."

I agreed wholeheartedly.* The Mahatma questioned me about America and Europe; we discussed India and world conditions.

"Mahadev," Gandhi said as Mr. Desai entered the room, "please make arrangements at Town Hall for Swamiji to speak there on yoga tomorrow night."

As I was bidding the Mahatma good night, he considerately handed me a bottle of citronella oil.

"The Wardha mosquitoes don't know a thing about *ahimsa*,† Swamiji!" he said, laughing.

The following morning our little group breakfasted early on whole-wheat porridge with molasses and milk. At ten-thirty we were called to the ashram porch for lunch with Gandhi and the *satyagrahis*. Today the menu included brown rice, a new selection of vegetables, and cardamom seeds.

Noon found me strolling about the ashram grounds, on to the grazing land of a few imperturbable cows. The protection of cows is a passion with Gandhi.

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* For years in America I had been observing periods of silence, to the consternation of callers and secretaries.

† Harmlessness; nonviolence; the foundation rock of Gandhi's creed. He was deeply influenced by the Jains, who revere *ahimsa* as the root virtue. Jainism, a sect of Hinduism, was widely spread in the sixth century B.C. by Mahavira, a contemporary of Buddha. May Mahavira ("great hero") look down the ages on his heroic son Gandhi!

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"The cow to me means the entire sub-human world, extending man's sympathies beyond his own species," the Mahatma has explained. "Man through the cow is enjoined to realise his identity with all that lives. Why the ancient rishis selected the cow for apotheosis is obvious to me. The cow in India was the best comparison; she was the giver of plenty. Not only did she give milk, but she also made agriculture possible. The cow is a poem of pity; one reads pity in the gentle animal. She is the second mother to millions of mankind. Protection of the cow means protection of the whole dumb creation of God. The appeal of the lower order of creation is all the more forceful because it is speechless."*

Certain daily rituals are enjoined on the orthodox Hindu. One is *Bhuta Yajna*, an offering of food to the animal kingdom. This ceremony symbolizes man's realization of his obligations to less evolved forms of creation—instinctively tied to body identification (a delusion that afflicts man also) but lacking the liberating quality of reason peculiar to humanity.

Bhuta Yajna thus reinforces man's readiness to succour the weak, as man in turn is comforted by countless solicitudes of higher unseen beings. Humanity is also under bond for rejuvenating gifts of Nature—prodigal in earth, sea, and sky. The evolutionary barrier of incommunicability among Nature, animals, man, and astral angels is surmounted by daily *yajnas* (rituals) of silent love.

Two other daily *yajnas* are *Pitri* and *Nri*. *Pitri Yajna* is an offering of oblations to ancestors: a symbol of man's acknowledgment of his debt to past generations, whose store of wisdom illumines humanity today. *Nri Yajna* is an offering of food to strangers or the poor: a symbol of the present responsibilities of man, his duties to contemporaries.

In the early afternoon I fulfilled a neighbourly *Nri Yajna* by a visit to Gandhi's ashram for little girls. Mr. Wright accompanied me

* Gandhi wrote beautifully on thousands of subjects. Of prayer he said: "It is a reminder to ourselves that we are helpless without God's support. No effort is complete without prayer, without a definite recognition that the best human endeavour is of no effect if it has not God's blessing behind it. Prayer is a call to humility. It is a call to self-purification, to inward search."

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Self-Realization Fellowship Ashram, Encinitas, California

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Paramahansa Yogananda on grounds of SRF Encinitas Hermitage, situated on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, *1940*

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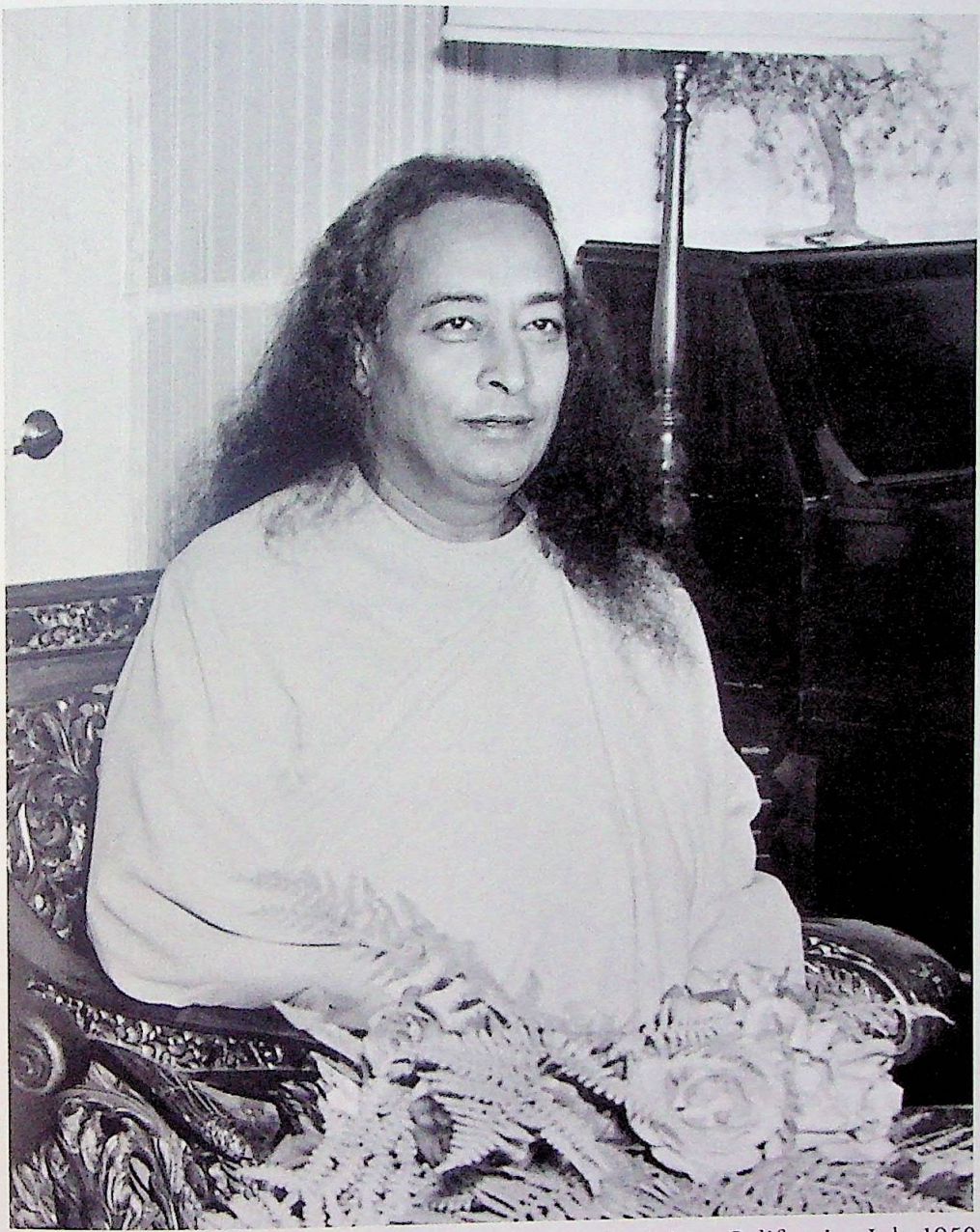

Paramahansa Yogananda in the SRF Hermitage, Encinitas, California, July 1950

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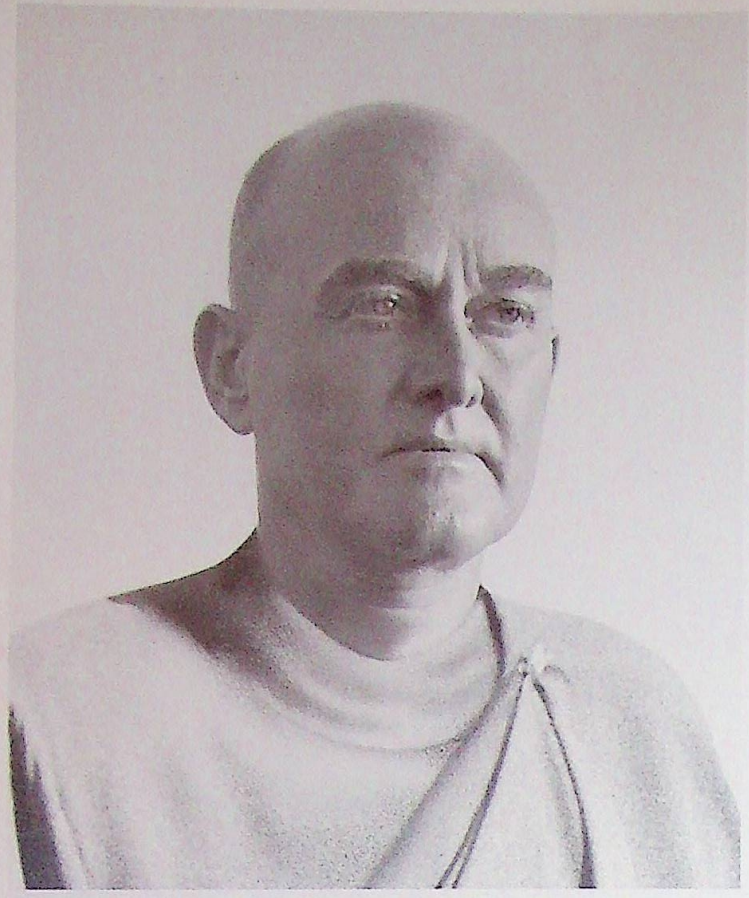

SUCCESSORS TO PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

Sri Rajarsi Janakananda, spiritual head and president of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship 1952-1955.

Sri Daya Mata, spiritual head and president of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship since the passing of Rajarsi Janakananda in February 1955.

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A WESTERNER IN SAMADHI

Rajarsi Janakananda (James J. Lynn)

On a private beach at Encinitas, California, in January 1937, after five years of daily practice of *Kriya Yoga,* Mr. Lynn received in *samadhi* (superconsciousness) the Beatific Vision: the Infinite Lord as the Indwelling Glory.

"The balanced life of Mr. Lynn may serve as an inspiration for all men," Yogananda said. Conscientiously discharging the duties of his worldly life, Mr. Lynn yet found time daily for deep meditation on God. The successful businessman became an illumined *Kriya Yogi.*

Paramahansaji often lovingly referred to him as "Saint Lynn," and in 1951 bestowed on him the monastic name Rajarsi Janakananda (after the spiritually illustrious King Janaka of ancient India). The title *rajarsi,* literally "royal rishi," is derived from *raja* ("king") + *rsi* (or *rishi,* "great saint").

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SRI SRI RAJARSI JANAKANANDA
(James J. Lynn) (1892–1955)
Second President of YSS/SRF

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SRI SRI DAYA MATA
Third President of YSS/SRF

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SRI DAYA MATA IN DIVINE COMMUNION

Sri Daya Mata, President of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/ Self-Realization Fellowship, absorbed in meditation, during a visit to India in 1968. "Paramahansa Yogananda taught us the way," she has written, "not only by his words and divine example, but by giving to us the scientific YSS/SRF methods of meditation. It is not possible to satisfy the soul's thirst merely by reading about truth. One must drink deep from the Fountain of Truth — God. Self-realization means just that: direct experience of God."

A true "Mother of Compassion," as her name Daya Mata implies, the theme of her life is loving God and sharing His love with all.

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Mr. Goodwin J. Knight, Lt. Governor of California (*centre*), with Yoganandaji and Mr. A. B. Rose, at dedication of Self-Realization Fellowship India Centre, Hollywood, California, April 8, 1951.

YOGANANDAJI WELCOMES INDIAN AMBASSADOR

The Indian Ambassador to the United States, Sri Binay Ranjan Sen, with Sri Yogananda ji at Self-Realization Fellowship International Headquarters, Los Angeles, March 4, 1952 — three days before the passing of the great yogi. In a eulogy at the funeral on March 11th, Ambassador Sen said: "If we had a man like Paramahansa Yogananda in the United Nations today, probably the world would be a better place than it is. To my knowledge, no one has worked more, has given more of himself, to bind the peoples of India and America together."

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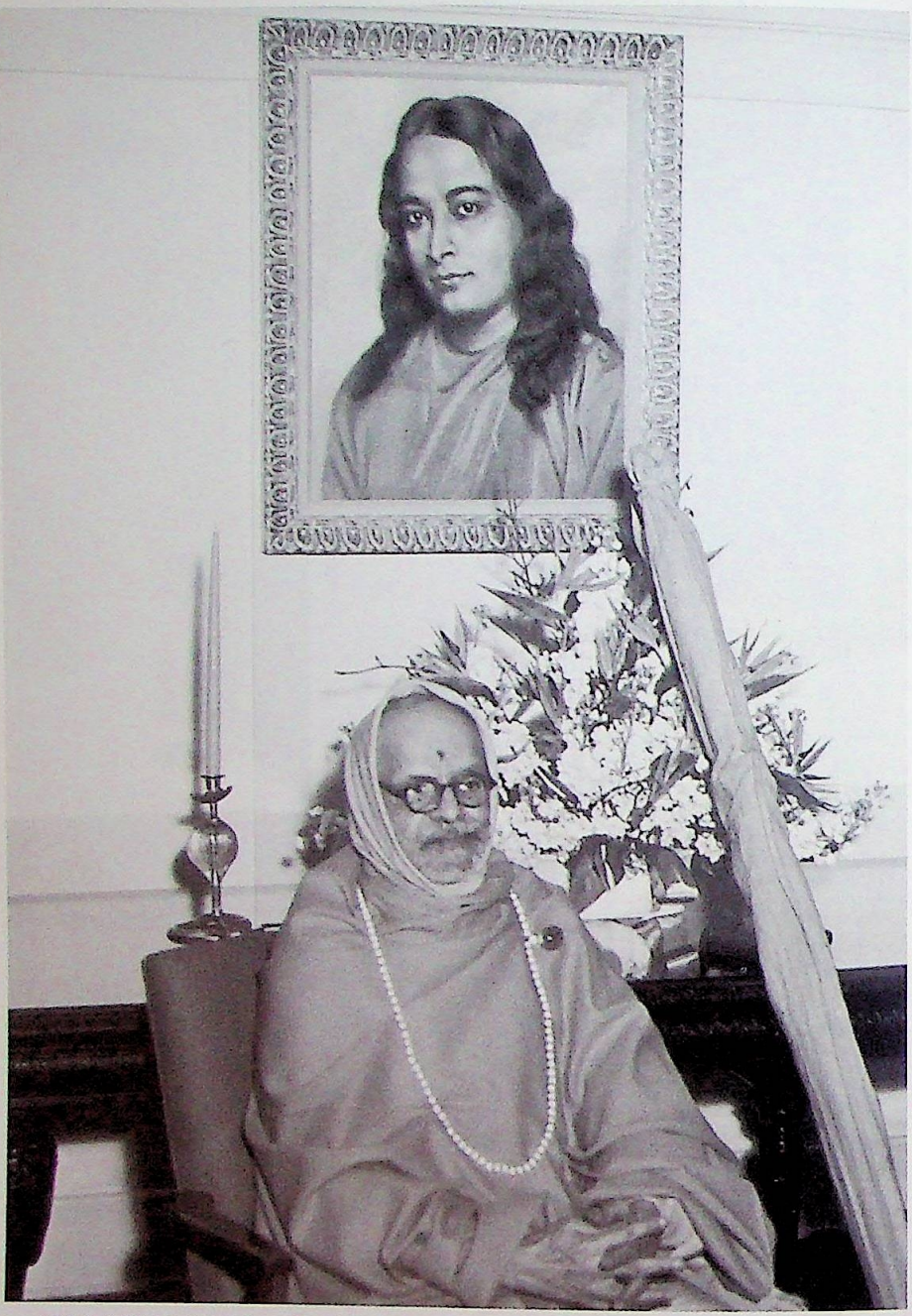

SRI SHANKARACHARYA AT SRF/YSS HEADQUARTERS

Sri Jagadguru Shankaracharya Bharati Krishna Tirtha of Puri, at Self-Realization Fellowship International Headquarters, Los Angeles, 1958. The Shankaracharya's three-month visit to America was sponsored by Self-Realization Fellowship.

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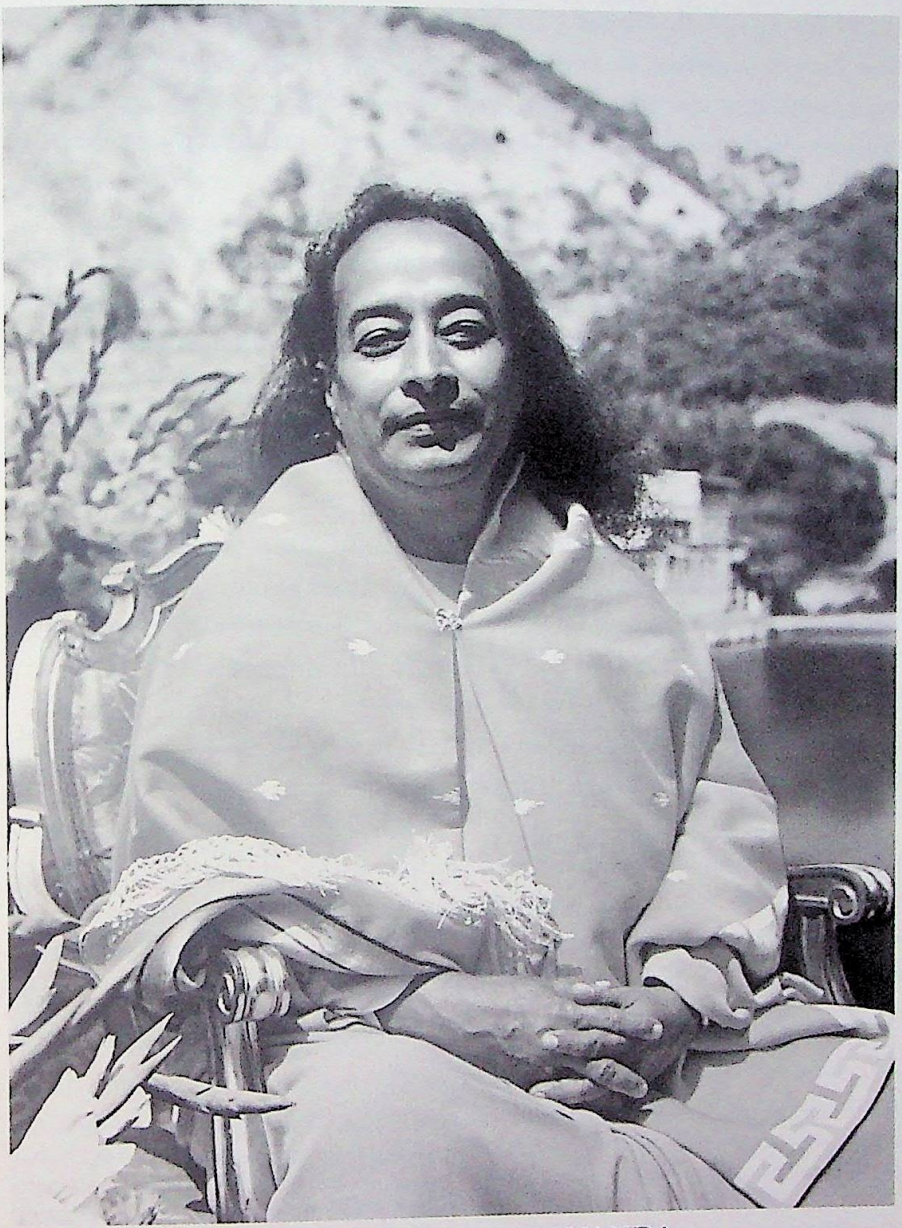

PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

Photographed on August 20, 1950, at dedication of Self-Realization Fellowship Lake Shrine, Pacific Palisades, California

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on the ten-minute drive. Tiny young flowerlike faces atop long-stemmed colourful saris! At the end of a brief talk in Hindi that I was giving outdoors, the skies unloosed a sudden downpour. Laughing, Mr. Wright and I climbed aboard the car and sped back to Maganvadi amidst sheets of driving silver. Such tropical intensity and splash!

Reentering the guest house I was struck anew by the stark simplicity and evidences of self-sacrifice which are everywhere present. The Gandhi vow of non-possession came early in his married life. Renouncing an extensive legal practice which had been yielding him an annual income of more than $20,000, the Mahatma dispersed all his wealth to the poor.

Sri Yukteswar used to poke gentle fun at the commonly inadequate conceptions of renunciation.

"A beggar cannot renounce wealth," Master would say. "If a man laments: 'My business has failed; my wife has left me; I will renounce all and enter a monastery,' to what worldly sacrifice is he referring? He did not renounce wealth and love; they renounced him!"

Saints like Gandhi, on the other hand, have made not only tangible material sacrifices, but also the more difficult renunciation of selfish motive and private goal, merging their inmost being in the stream of humanity as a whole.

The Mahatma's remarkable wife, Kasturbai, did not object when he failed to set aside any part of his wealth for the use of her and their children. Married in early youth, Gandhi and his wife took a vow of celibacy after the birth of four sons.* A tranquil heroine in the intense drama that has been their life together, Kasturbai

* Gandhi has described his life with devastating candour in *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1927–28, in 2 vols.). This autobiography has been summarized in *Mahatma Gandhi, His Own Story*, edited by C. F. Andrews, with an introduction by John Haynes Holmes (New York: Macmillan Co., 1930).

Many autobiographies replete with famous names and colourful events are almost completely silent on any phase of inner analysis or development. One lays down each of these books with a certain dissatisfaction, as though saying: "Here is a man who knew many notable persons, but who never knew himself." This reaction is impossible with Gandhi's autobiography; he exposes his faults and subterfuges with an impersonal devotion to truth rare in annals of any age.

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has followed her husband to prison, shared his three-week fasts, and fully borne her share of his endless responsibilities. She has paid Gandhi the following tribute:

> I thank you for having had the privilege of being your lifelong companion and helpmate. I thank you for the most perfect marriage in the world, based on *brahmacharya* (self-control) and not on sex. I thank you for having considered me your equal in your life work for India. I thank you for not being one of those husbands who spend their time in gambling, racing, women, wine, and song, tiring of their wives and children as the little boy quickly tires of his childhood toys. How thankful I am that you were not one of those husbands who devote their time to growing rich on the exploitation of the labour of others.
>
> How thankful I am that you put God and country before bribes, that you had the courage of your convictions and a complete and implicit faith in God. How thankful I am for a husband who put God and his country before me. I am grateful to you for your tolerance of me and my shortcomings of youth, when I grumbled and rebelled against the change you made in our mode of living, from so much to so little.
>
> As a young child, I lived in your parents' home; your mother was a great and good woman; she trained me, taught me how to be a brave, courageous wife and how to keep the love and respect of her son, my future husband. As the years passed and you became India's most beloved leader, I had none of the fears that beset the wife who may be cast aside when her husband has climbed the ladder of success, as so often happens in other countries. I knew that death would still find us husband and wife.

For years Kasturbai performed the duties of treasurer of the public funds which the idolized Mahatma is able to raise by millions. Many humourous stories are told in Indian homes to the effect that husbands are nervous about their wives' wearing any jewellery to a Gandhi meeting; the Mahatma's magical tongue, pleading for the downtrodden, charms the gold bracelets and diamond necklaces right off the arms and necks of the wealthy into the collection basket!

One day the public treasurer, Kasturbai, could not account for a disbursement of four rupees. Gandhi duly published an auditing in

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which he inexorably pointed out his wife's four-rupee discrepancy.

I had often told this story before classes of my American students. One evening a woman in the hall had given an outraged gasp.

"Mahatma or no Mahatma," she had cried, "if he were my husband I would have given him a black eye for such an unnecessary public insult!"

After some good-humoured banter had passed between us on the subject of American wives and Hindu wives, I had gone on to a fuller explanation.

"Mrs. Gandhi considers the Mahatma not as her husband but as her guru, one who has the right to discipline her for even insignificant errors," I had pointed out. "Some time after Kasturbai had been publicly rebuked, Gandhi was sentenced to prison on a political charge. As he was calmly bidding farewell to his wife, she fell at his feet. 'Master,' she said humbly, 'if I have ever offended you, please forgive me.' "

At three o'clock that afternoon in Wardha, I betook myself, by previous appointment, to the writing room of the saint who had been able to make an unflinching disciple out of his own wife—rare miracle! Gandhi looked up with his unforgettable smile.

"Mahatmaji," I said as I squatted beside him on the uncushioned mat, "please tell me your definition of *ahimsa*."

"The avoidance of harm to any living creature in thought or deed."

"Beautiful ideal! But the world will always ask: May one not kill a cobra to protect a child, or one's self?"

"I could not kill a cobra without violating two of my vows—fearlessness, and non-killing. I would rather try inwardly to calm the snake by vibrations of love. I cannot possibly lower my standards to suit my circumstances." With his charming candour, he added, "I must confess that I could not serenely carry on this conversation were I faced by a cobra!"

I remarked on several very recent Western books on diet which lay on his desk.

"Yes, diet is important in the *Satyagraha* movement—as everywhere else," he said with a chuckle. "Because I advocate complete continence for *satyagrahis*, I am always trying to find out the best

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diet for the celibate. One must conquer the palate before he can control the procreative instinct. Semi-starvation or unbalanced diets are not the answer. After overcoming the inward *greed* for food, a *satyagrahi* must continue to follow a rational vegetarian diet with all necessary vitamins, minerals, calories, and so forth. By inward and outward wisdom in regard to eating, the *satyagrahi's* sexual fluid is easily turned into vital energy for the whole body."

The Mahatma and I compared our knowledge of good meat substitutes. "The avocado is excellent," I said. "There are numerous avocado groves near my centre in California."

Gandhi's face lit with interest. "I wonder if they would grow in Wardha? The *satyagrahis* would appreciate a new food."

"I will be sure to send some avocado plants from Los Angeles to Wardha." I added, "Eggs are a high-protein food; are they forbidden to *satyagrahis*?"

"Not unfertilized eggs." The Mahatma laughed reminiscently. "For years I would not countenance their use; even now I personally do not eat them. One of my daughters-in-law was once dying of malnutrition; her doctor insisted on eggs. I would not agree, and advised him to give her some egg substitute.

"'Gandhiji,' the doctor said, 'unfertilized eggs contain no life sperm; no killing is involved.'

"I then gladly gave permission for my daughter-in-law to eat eggs; she was soon restored to health."

On the previous night Gandhi had expressed a wish to receive the *Kriya Yoga* of Lahiri Mahasaya. I was touched by the Mahatma's open-mindedness and spirit of inquiry. He is childlike in his divine quest, revealing that pure receptivity which Jesus praised in children, "...of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The hour for my promised instruction had arrived; several *satyagrahis* now entered the room—Mr. Desai, Dr. Pingale, and a few others who desired the *Kriya* technique.

I first taught the little class the physical Yogoda exercises. The body is visualized as divided into twenty parts; the will directs energy in turn to each section. Soon everyone was vibrating before me like a human motor. It was easy to observe the rippling effect on Gandhi's twenty body parts, at nearly all times completely exposed

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to view! Though very thin, he is not unpleasingly so; the skin of his body is smooth and unwrinkled.*

Later I initiated the group into the liberating technique of *Kriya Yoga*.

The Mahatma has reverently studied all world religions. The Jain scriptures, the Biblical New Testament, and the sociological writings of Tolstoy† are the three main sources of Gandhi's nonviolence convictions. He has stated his credo thus:

> I believe the Bible, the Koran, and the Zend-Avesta‡ to be as divinely inspired as the Vedas. I believe in the institution of Gurus, but in this age millions must go without a Guru, because it is a rare thing to find a combination of perfect purity and perfect learning. But one need not despair of ever knowing the truth of one's religion, because the fundamentals of Hinduism as of every great religion are unchangeable, and easily understood.
>
> I believe like every Hindu in God and His oneness, in rebirth and salvation....I can no more describe my feeling for Hinduism than for my own wife. She moves me as no other woman in the world can. Not that she has no faults; I daresay she has many more than I see myself. But the feeling of an indissoluble bond is there. Even so I feel for and about Hinduism with all its faults and limitations. Nothing delights me so much as the music of the Gita, or the Ramayana by Tulsidas. When I fancied I was taking my last breath, the Gita was my solace.
>
> Hinduism is not an exclusive religion. In it there is room for the worship of all the prophets of the world.§ It is not a missionary religion in the ordinary sense of the term. It has no doubt absorbed many tribes in its fold, but this absorption has been of an evolution-

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* Gandhi has undergone many short and long fasts. He enjoys exceptionally good health. His books, *Diet and Diet Reform*; *Nature Cure*; and *Key to Health* are available from Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, India.

† Thoreau, Ruskin, and Mazzini are three other Western writers whose sociological views Gandhi has studied carefully.

‡ The sacred scripture given to Persia about 1000 B.C. by Zoroaster.

§ The unique feature of Hinduism among the world religions is that it derives not from a single great founder but from the impersonal Vedic scriptures. Hinduism thus gives scope for worshipful incorporation into its fold of prophets of all ages and all lands. The Vedic scriptures regulate not only devotional practices but all important social customs, in an effort to bring man's every action into harmony with divine law.

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ary, imperceptible character. Hinduism tells each man to worship God according to his own faith or *dharma*,* and so lives at peace with all religions.

Of Christ, Gandhi has written: "I am sure that if He were living here now among men, He would bless the lives of many who perhaps have never even heard His name...just as it is written: 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord...but he that doeth the will of my Father.'† In the lesson of His own life, Jesus gave humanity the magnificent purpose and the single objective toward which we all ought to aspire. I believe that He belongs not solely to Christianity, but to the entire world, to all lands and races."

On my last evening in Wardha I addressed the meeting which had been called by Mr. Desai in Town Hall. The room was thronged to the windowsills with about 400 persons assembled to hear the talk on yoga. I spoke first in Hindi, then in English. Our little group returned to the ashram in time for a good-night glimpse of the Mahatma—deep in peace and correspondence.

Night was still lingering when I rose at five a.m. Village life was already stirring; first a bullock cart by the ashram gates, then a peasant with his huge burden balanced precariously on his head. After breakfast our trio sought out Gandhi for farewell *pranams*. The saint rises at four o'clock for his morning prayer.

"Mahatmaji, good-bye!" I knelt to touch his feet. "India is safe in your keeping."

Years have rolled by since the Wardha idyll; the earth, oceans, and skies have darkened with a world at war. Alone among great leaders, Gandhi has offered a practical nonviolent alternative to armed might. To redress grievances and remove injustices, the Mahatma has employed nonviolent means which again and again have proved their effectiveness. He states his doctrine in these words:

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* A comprehensive Sanskrit word for law; conformity to law or natural righteousness; duty as inherent in the circumstances in which a man finds himself at any given time. The scriptures define *dharma* as "the natural universal laws whose observance enables man to save himself from degradation and suffering."

† *Matthew* 7:21 (Bible).

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I have found that life persists in the midst of destruction. Therefore there must be a higher law than that of destruction. Only under that law would well-ordered society be intelligible and life worth living.

If that is the law of life we must work it out in daily existence. Wherever there are wars, wherever we are confronted with an opponent, conquer by love. I have found that the certain law of love has answered in my own life as the law of destruction has never done.

In India we have had an ocular demonstration of the operation of this law on the widest scale possible. I don't claim that nonviolence has penetrated the 360,000,000 people in India, but I do claim it has penetrated deeper than any other doctrine in an incredibly short time.

It takes a fairly strenuous course of training to attain a mental state of nonviolence. It is a disciplined life, like the life of a soldier. The perfect state is reached only when the mind, body, and speech are in proper coordination. Every problem would lend itself to solution if we determined to make the law of truth and nonviolence the law of life.

The grim march of world political events points inexorably to the truth that without spiritual vision, the people perish. Science, if not religion, has awakened in humanity a dim sense of the insecurity and even insubstantiality of all material things. Where indeed may man go now, if not to his Source and Origin, the Spirit within him?

Consulting history, one may reasonably state that man's problems have not been solved by the use of brute force. World War I produced an earth-chilling snowball of dread karma that swelled into World War II. Only the warmth of brotherhood can melt the present colossal snowball of sanguinary karma that may otherwise grow into World War III. Unholy twentieth-century trinity! Use of jungle logic instead of human reason in settling disputes will restore the earth to a jungle. If not brothers in life, then brothers in violent death. It was not for such ignominy that God lovingly permitted man to discover the release of atomic energies!

War and crime never pay. The billions of dollars that went up in the smoke of explosive nothingness would have been sufficient to have made a new world, one almost free from disease and completely free from poverty. Not an earth of fear, chaos, famine,

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pestilence, the *danse macabre*, but one broad land of peace, prosperity, and widening knowledge.

The nonviolent voice of Gandhi appeals to man's highest conscience. Let nations ally themselves no longer with death, but with life; not with destruction, but with construction; not with hate, but with the creative miracles of love.

"One should forgive, under any injury," says the *Mahabharata*. "It hath been said that the continuation of the species is due to man's being forgiving. Forgiveness is holiness; by forgiveness the universe is held together. Forgiveness is the might of the mighty; forgiveness is sacrifice; forgiveness is quiet of mind. Forgiveness and gentleness are the qualities of the Self-possessed. They represent eternal virtue."

Nonviolence is the natural outgrowth of the law of forgiveness and love. "If loss of life becomes necessary in a righteous battle," Gandhi proclaims, "one should be prepared, like Jesus, to shed his own, not others', blood. Eventually there will be less blood spilt in the world."

Epics shall someday be written on the Indian *satyagrahis* who withstood hate with love, violence with nonviolence, who allowed themselves to be mercilessly slaughtered rather than bear arms. The result on certain historic occasions was that opponents threw down their guns and fled—shamed, shaken to their depths by the sight of men who valued the lives of others above their own.

"I would wait, if need be for ages," Gandhi says, "rather than seek the freedom of my country through bloody means." The Bible warns us: "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."* The Mahatma has written:

> I call myself a nationalist, but my nationalism is as broad as the universe. It includes in its sweep all the nations of the earth.† My

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* *Matthew* 26:52 (Bible). This is one of numerous passages in the Bible that necessarily imply the reincarnation of man. (See pp. 171–72 n.) Many of life's complexities are explicable only through an understanding of the karmic law of justice.

† "Let not a man glory in this, that he love his country;
Let him rather glory in this, that he love his kind."

—*Persian proverb*

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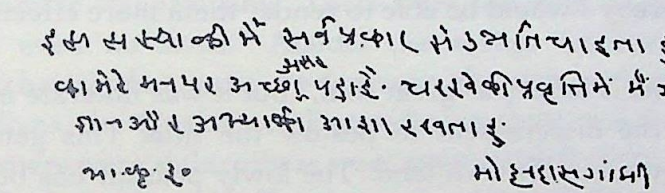
nationalism includes the well-being of the whole world. I do not want my India to rise on the ashes of other nations. I do not want India to exploit a single human being. I want India to be strong in order that she can infect the other nations also with her strength. Not so with a single nation in Europe today; they do not give strength to the others.

President Wilson mentioned his beautiful fourteen points, but said: "After all, if this endeavour of ours to arrive at peace fails, we have our armaments to fall back upon." I want to reverse that position, and I say: "Our armaments have failed already. Let us now be in search of something new; let us try the force of love and God which is truth." When we have got that, we shall want nothing else.

MAHATMA GANDHI'S HANDWRITING IN HINDI



Mahatma Gandhi visited Yogoda Satsanga Brahmacharya Vidyalaya. He graciously wrote the foregoing lines in the guest book. He said:

"This institution has deeply impressed my mind. I cherish high hopes that this school will further encourage the use of the spinning wheel."

September 17, 1925 [signed] Mohandas Gandhi

By the Mahatma's training of thousands of true *satyagrahis* (those who have taken the eleven rigorous vows mentioned in the first part of this chapter), who in turn spread the message; by patiently educating the Indian masses to understand the spiritual and eventually material benefits of nonviolence; by arming his people with nonviolent weapons—noncooperation with injustice, the willingness to endure indignities, prison, death itself rather than resort to arms; by enlisting world sympathy through countless examples

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of heroic martyrdom among *satyagrahis*, Gandhi has dramatically portrayed the practical nature of nonviolence, its solemn power to settle disputes without war.

Gandhi has already won through nonviolent means a greater number of political concessions for his land than any other leader of a country has ever won except through bullets. Nonviolent methods for eradication of all wrongs and evils have been strikingly applied not only in the political arena but in the delicate and complicated field of Indian social reform. Gandhi and his followers have removed many long-standing feuds between Hindus and Mohammedans; hundreds of thousands of Moslems look to the Mahatma as their leader. The untouchables have found in him their fearless and triumphant champion. "If there be a rebirth in store for me," Gandhi wrote, "I wish to be born a pariah in the midst of pariahs, because thereby I would be able to render them more effective service."

The Mahatma is indeed a "great soul," but it was illiterate millions who had the discernment to bestow the title. This gentle prophet is honoured in his own land. The lowly peasant has been able to rise to Gandhi's high challenge. The Mahatma wholeheartedly believes in the inherent nobility of man. The inevitable failures have never disillusioned him. "Even if the opponent plays him false twenty times," he writes, "the *satyagrahi* is ready to trust him the twenty-first time, for an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of the creed."*

"Mahatmaji, you are an exceptional man. You must not expect the world to act as you do." A critic once made this observation.

"It is curious how we delude ourselves, fancying that the body can be improved, but that it is impossible to evoke the hidden powers of the soul," Gandhi replied. "I am engaged in trying to show

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* "Then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."—*Matthew* 18:21–22 (Bible). I prayed deeply to understand this uncompromising counsel. "Lord," I protested, "is it possible?" When the Divine Voice finally responded, It brought a humbling flood of light:

"How many times, O Man, do I forgive each of you daily?"

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that if I have any of those powers, I am as frail a mortal as any of us and that I never had anything extraordinary about me nor have I now. I am a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow mortal. I own, however, that I have enough humility to confess my errors and to retrace my steps. I own that I have an immovable faith in God and His goodness, and an unconsumable passion for truth and love. But is that not what every person has latent in him?" He added: "If we may make new discoveries and inventions in the phenomenal world, must we declare our bankruptcy in the spiritual domain? Is it impossible to multiply the exceptions so as to make them the rule? Must man always be brute first and man after, if at all?"*

Americans may well remember with pride the successful non-violence experiment of William Penn, in founding his 17th-century colony in Pennsylvania. There were "no forts, no soldiers, no militia, even no arms." Amidst the savage frontier wars and the butcheries that went on between the new settlers and the Red Indians, the Quakers of Pennsylvania alone remained unmolested. "Others were slain; others were massacred; but they were safe. Not a Quaker woman suffered assault; not a Quaker child was slain, not a Quaker man was tortured." When the Quakers were finally forced to give up the government of the state, "war broke out, and some Pennsylvanians were killed. But only three Quakers were killed, three who had so far fallen from their faith as to carry weapons of defence."

"Resort to force in the Great War (I) failed to bring tranquillity," Franklin D. Roosevelt pointed out. "Victory and defeat were

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* Charles P. Steinmetz, the great electrical engineer, was once asked by Mr. Roger W. Babson: "What line of research will see the greatest development during the next fifty years?" "I think the greatest discovery will be made along spiritual lines," Steinmetz replied. "Here is a force which history clearly teaches has been the greatest power in the development of men. Yet we have merely been playing with it and have never seriously studied it as we have the physical forces. Someday people will learn that material things do not bring happiness and are of little use in making men and women creative and powerful. Then the scientists of the world will turn their laboratories over to the study of God and prayer and the spiritual forces which as yet have hardly been scratched. When this day comes, the world will see more advancement in one generation than it has seen in the past four."

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alike sterile. That lesson the world should have learned."

"The more weapons of violence, the more misery to mankind," Lao-tzu taught. "The triumph of violence ends in a festival of mourning."

"I am fighting for nothing less than world peace," Gandhi has declared. "If the Indian movement is carried to success on a nonviolent *Satyagraha* basis, it will give a new meaning to patriotism and, if I may say so in all humility, to life itself."

Before the West dismisses Gandhi's programme as one of an impractical dreamer, let it first reflect on a definition of *Satyagraha* by the Master of Galilee:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil [with evil]: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."*

Gandhi's epoch has extended, with the beautiful precision of cosmic timing, into a century already desolated and devastated by two World Wars. A divine handwriting appears on the granite wall of his life: a warning against the further shedding of blood among brothers.

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* *Matthew* 5:38–39 (Bible).

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MAHATMA GANDHI — IN MEMORIAM

"He was in the true sense the father of the nation, and a madman has slain him. Millions and millions are mourning because the light has gone out....The light that shone in this land was no ordinary light. For a thousand years that light will be seen in this country, and the world will see it." So spoke Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru shortly after Mahatma Gandhi had been assassinated in New Delhi on January 30, 1948.

Five months earlier, India had peacefully achieved her national independence. The work of the 78-year-old Gandhi was done; he realised that his hour was nigh. "Abha, bring me all the important papers," he said to his grandniece on the morning of the tragedy. "I must reply today. Tomorrow may never be." In numerous passages of his writings, also, Gandhi gave intimations of his final destiny.

As the dying Mahatma sank slowly to the ground, three bullets in his frail and fast-worn body, he lifted his hands in the traditional Hindu gesture of greeting, silently bestowing his forgiveness. Innocent artist as he was in all the ways of his life, Gandhi became a supreme artist at the moment of his death. All the sacrifices of his selfless life had made possible that final loving gesture.

"Generations to come, it may be," Albert Einstein wrote in a tribute to the Mahatma, "will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon the earth." A dispatch from the Vatican in Rome said: "The assassination caused great sorrow here. Gandhi is mourned as an apostle of Christian virtues."

Fraught with symbolic meaning are the lives of all great ones who come to earth for the accomplishment of a specific righteousness. Gandhi's dramatic death in the cause of Indian unity has highlighted his message to a world torn in every continent with disunity. That message he has stated in prophetic words:

"Nonviolence has come among men and it will live. It is the harbinger of the peace of the world."

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The Bengali "Joy-Permeated Mother"

"Sir, please do not leave India without a glimpse of Nirmala Devi. Her sanctity is intense; she is known far and wide as Ananda Moyi Ma (Joy-Permeated Mother)." My niece, Amiyo Bose, gazed at me earnestly.

"Of course! I want very much to see the woman saint." I added, "I have read of her advanced state of God-realization. A little article about her appeared years ago in *East-West*."

"I have met her," Amiyo went on. "She recently visited my own small town of Jamshedpur. At the entreaty of a disciple, Ananda Moyi Ma went to the home of a dying man. She stood by his bedside; as her hand touched his forehead, his death-rattle ceased. The disease vanished at once; to the man's glad astonishment, he was well."

A few days later I heard that the Blissful Mother was staying at the home of a disciple in the Bhowanipur section of Calcutta. Mr. Wright and I set out immediately from my father's Calcutta home. As the Ford neared the Bhowanipur house, my companion and I observed an unusual street scene.

Ananda Moyi Ma was standing in an open-topped automobile, blessing a throng of about one hundred disciples. She was evidently on the point of departure. Mr. Wright parked the Ford some distance away, and accompanied me on foot toward the quiet assemblage. The woman saint glanced in our direction; she

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alighted from her car and walked toward us.

"Father, you have come!" With these fervent words (in Bengali) she put her arm around my neck and her head on my shoulder. Mr. Wright, to whom I had just remarked that I did not know the saint, was hugely enjoying this extraordinary demonstration of welcome. The eyes of the hundred *chelas* were also fixed with some surprise on the affectionate tableau.

I had instantly seen that the saint was in a high state of *samadhi*. Oblivious to her outward garb as a woman, she knew herself as the changeless soul; from that plane she was joyously greeting another devotee of God. She led me by the hand into her automobile.

"Ananda Moyi Ma, I am delaying your journey!" I protested.

"Father, I am meeting you for the first time in this life,* after ages!" she said. "Please do not leave yet."

We sat together in the rear seats of the car. The Blissful Mother soon entered the immobile ecstatic state. Her beautiful eyes glanced heavenward and, half-opened, became stilled, gazing into the near-far inner Elysium. The disciples chanted gently: "Victory to Mother Divine!"

I had found many men of God-realization in India, but never before had I met such an exalted woman saint. Her gentle face was burnished with the ineffable joy that had given her the name of Blissful Mother. Long black tresses lay loosely behind her unveiled head. A red dot of sandalwood paste on her forehead symbolized the spiritual eye, ever open within her. Tiny face, tiny hands, tiny feet—a contrast to her spiritual magnitude!

I put some questions to a nearby woman *chela* while Ananda Moyi Ma remained entranced.

"The Blissful Mother travels widely in India; in many parts she has hundreds of disciples," the *chela* told me. "Her courageous efforts have brought about many desirable social reforms. Although a Brahmin, the saint recognizes no caste distinctions. A group of us always travels with her, looking after her comforts. We have to mother her; she takes no notice of her body. If no one gave her food, she

* Ananda Moyi Ma was born in 1896 in the village of Kheora in the Tripura District of east Bengal.

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would not eat or make any inquiries. Even when meals are placed before her, she does not touch them. To prevent her disappearance from this world, we disciples feed her with our own hands. For days together she often stays in the divine trance, scarcely breathing, her eyes unwinking. One of her chief disciples is her husband, Bholanath. Many years ago, soon after their marriage, he took the vow of silence."

The *chela* pointed to a broad-shouldered, fine-featured man with long hair and hoary beard. He was standing quietly in the midst of the gathering, his hands folded in a disciple's reverential attitude.

Refreshed by her dip in the Infinite, Ananda Moyi Ma was now focussing her consciousness on the material world.

"Father, please tell me where you stay." Her voice was clear and melodious.

"At present, in Calcutta or Ranchi; but soon I shall be returning to America."

"America?"

"Yes. An Indian woman saint would be sincerely appreciated there by spiritual seekers. Would you like to go?"

"If Father can take me, I will go."

This reply caused her nearby disciples to start in alarm.

"Twenty or more of us always travel with the Blissful Mother," one of them told me firmly. "We could not live without her. Wherever she goes, we must go."

Reluctantly I abandoned the plan, as possessing an impractical feature of spontaneous enlargement!

"Please come at least to Ranchi, with your devotees," I said on taking leave of the saint. "As a divine child yourself, you will enjoy the little ones in my school."

"Whenever Father takes me, I will gladly go."

A short time later the Ranchi Vidyalaya was in gala array for the saint's promised visit. The youngsters looked forward to any day of festivity—no lessons, hours of music, and a feast for the climax!

"Victory! Ananda Moyi Ma, ki jai!" This reiterated chant from scores of enthusiastic little throats greeted the saint's party as it entered the school gates. Showers of marigolds, tinkle of cymbals, lusty blowing of conch shells and beat of the *mridanga* drum! The Blissful Mother wandered smilingly over the sunny Vidyalaya

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grounds, ever carrying within her heart the portable paradise.

"It is beautiful here," Ananda Moyi Ma said graciously as I led her into the main building. She seated herself with a childlike smile by my side. The closest of dear friends, she made one feel, yet an aura of remoteness was ever around her—the paradoxical isolation of Omnipresence.

"Please tell me something of your life."

"Father knows all about it; why repeat it?" She evidently felt that the factual history of one short incarnation was beneath notice.

I laughed, gently repeating my request.

"Father, there is little to tell." She spread her graceful hands in a deprecatory gesture. "My consciousness has never associated itself with this temporary body. Before I* came on this earth, Father, 'I was the same.' As a little girl, 'I was the same.' I grew into womanhood; still 'I was the same.' When the family in which I had been born made arrangements to have this body married, 'I was the same.' And, Father, in front of you now, 'I am the same.' Ever afterward, though the dance of creation change around me in the hall of eternity, 'I shall be the same.' "

Ananda Moyi Ma sank into a deep meditative state. Her form was statue-still; she had fled to her ever calling kingdom. The dark pools of her eyes appeared lifeless and glassy. This expression is often present when saints remove their consciousness from the physical body, which is then hardly more than a piece of soulless clay. We sat together for an hour in the ecstatic trance. She returned to this world with a gay little laugh.

"Please, Ananda Moyi Ma," I said, "come with me to the garden. Mr. Wright will take some pictures."

"Of course, Father. Your will is my will." Her glorious eyes retained an unchanging divine lustre as she posed for many photographs.

Time for the feast! Ananda Moyi Ma squatted on her blanket-seat, a disciple at her elbow to feed her. Like an infant, the saint

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* Ananda Moyi Ma does not refer to herself as "I"; she uses humble circumlocutions like "this body" or "this little girl" or "your daughter." Nor does she refer to anyone as her "disciple." With impersonal wisdom she bestows equally on all human beings the divine love of the Universal Mother.

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obediently swallowed the food after the *chela* had brought it to her lips. It was plain that the Blissful Mother did not recognize any difference between curries and sweetmeats!

As dusk approached, the saint left with her party amid a shower of rose petals, her hands raised in blessing on the little lads. Their faces shone with the affection she had effortlessly awakened.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," Christ has proclaimed; "this is the first commandment."*

Casting aside every inferior attachment, Ananda Moyi Ma offers her sole allegiance to the Lord. Not by the hair-splitting distinctions of scholars but by the sure logic of faith, the childlike saint has solved the only problem in human life—establishment of unity with God.

Man has forgotten this stark simplicity, now befogged by a million issues. Refusing a monotheistic love to the Creator, nations try to disguise their infidelity by punctilious respect before the outward shrines of charity. These humanitarian gestures are virtuous, because for a moment they divert man's attention from himself; but they do not free him from his prime responsibility in life, referred to by Jesus as the "first commandment." The uplifting obligation to love God is assumed with man's earliest breath of an air freely bestowed by his only Benefactor.†

On one other occasion after her visit to the Ranchi school I had opportunity to see Ananda Moyi Ma. She stood with a group some months later on the Serampore station platform, waiting for the train.

"Father, I am going to the Himalayas," she told me. "Some kind persons have built for us a hermitage in Dehra Dun."

As she boarded the train, I marvelled to see that whether amid a crowd, on a train, feasting, or sitting in silence, her eyes never looked away from God.

Within me I still hear her voice, an echo of measureless sweetness:

"Behold, now and always one with the Eternal, 'I am ever the same.'"

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* *Mark* 12:30 (Bible).

† "Many feel the urge to create a new and better world. Rather than let your thoughts dwell on such matters, you should concentrate on That by the contemplation of which there is hope of perfect peace. It is man's duty to become a seeker after God or Truth."—*Ananda Moyi Ma.*

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The Woman Yogi Who Never Eats

"Sir, whither are we bound this morning?" Mr. Wright was driving the Ford; he took his eyes off the road long enough to gaze at me with a questioning twinkle. From day to day he seldom knew what part of Bengal he would be discovering next.

"God willing," I replied devoutly, "we are on our way to see an eighth wonder of the world—a woman saint whose diet is thin air!"

"Repetition of wonders—after Therese Neumann." But Mr. Wright laughed eagerly just the same; he even accelerated the speed of the car. More extraordinary grist for his travel diary! Not one of an average tourist, that!

The Ranchi school had just been left behind us; we had risen before the sun. Besides my secretary and me, three Bengali friends were in the party. We drank in the exhilarating air, the natural wine of the morning. Our driver guided the car warily among the early peasants and the two-wheeled carts, slowly drawn by yoked, hump-shouldered bullocks, inclined to dispute the road with a honking interloper.

"Sir, we would like to know more of the fasting saint."

"Her name is Giri Bala," I informed my companions. "I first heard about her years ago from a scholarly gentleman, Sthiti Lal Nundy. He often came to the Garpar Road home to tutor my brother Bishnu.

"'I know Giri Bala well,' Sthiti Babu told me. 'She employs a certain yoga technique that enables her to live without eating. I was

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her close neighbour in Nawabganj near Ichapur.* I made it a point to watch her closely; never did I find evidence that she was taking either food or drink. My interest finally mounted so high that I approached the Maharaja of Burdwan† and asked him to conduct an investigation. Astounded at the story, he invited her to his palace. She agreed to a test and lived for two months locked up in a small section of his home. Later she returned for a palace visit of twenty days; and then for a third test of fifteen days. The Maharaja himself told me that these three rigorous scrutinies had convinced him beyond doubt of her noneating state.'

"This story of Sthiti Babu's has remained in my mind for over twenty-five years," I concluded. "Sometimes in America I wondered if the river of time would not swallow the yogini before I could meet her. She must be quite aged now. I do not even know where, or if, she lives. But in a few hours we shall reach Purulia; her brother has a home there."

By ten-thirty our little group was conversing with the brother, Lambodar Dey, a lawyer of Purulia.

"Yes, my sister is living. She sometimes stays with me here, but at present she is at our family home in Biur." Lambodar Babu glanced doubtfully at the Ford. "I hardly think, Swamiji, that any automobile has ever penetrated into the interior as far as Biur. It might be best if you all resign yourselves to the jolts of a bullock cart."

As one voice our party pledged loyalty to the Pride of Detroit.

"The Ford comes from America," I told the lawyer. "It would be a shame to deprive it of an opportunity to get acquainted with the heart of Bengal!"

"May Ganesh‡ go with you!" Lambodar Babu said, laughing. He added courteously, "If you ever get there, I am sure Giri Bala will be glad to see you. She is approaching her seventies, but continues in excellent health."

"Please, tell me, sir, if it is absolutely true that she eats nothing?"

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* In northern Bengal.

† H.H. Sir Bijay Chand Mahtab, now dead. His family doubtless possesses some record of the Maharaja's three investigations of Giri Bala.

‡ "Remover of Obstacles," the god of good fortune.

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I looked directly into his eyes, those telltale windows of the mind.

"It is true." His gaze was open and honourable. "In more than five decades I have never seen her eat a morsel. If the world suddenly came to an end, I could not be more astonished than by the sight of my sister's taking food!"

We chuckled together over the improbability of these two cosmic events.

"Giri Bala has never sought an inaccessible solitude for her yoga practices," Lambodar Babu went on. "She has lived her entire life surrounded by her family and friends. They are all well accustomed now to her strange state—not one of them who would not be stupefied if Giri Bala suddenly decided to eat anything! Sister is naturally retiring, as befits a Hindu widow, but our little circle in Purulia and in Biur all know that she is literally an 'exceptional' woman."

The brother's sincerity was manifest. Our little party thanked him warmly and set out toward Biur. We stopped at a street shop for curry and *luchis*, attracting a swarm of urchins who gathered round to watch Mr. Wright eating with his fingers in the simple Hindu manner.* Hearty appetites caused us to fortify ourselves against an afternoon which, unknown to us at the moment, was to prove fairly laborious.

Our way now led east through sun-baked rice fields into the Burdwan section of Bengal. On through roads lined with dense vegetation; the songs of the mynas and the stripe-throated bulbuls streamed out from trees with huge, umbrellalike branches. A bullock cart now and then, the *rini, rini, manju, manju* squeak of its axle and iron-shod wooden wheels contrasting sharply in mind with the *swish, swish* of auto tires over the aristocratic asphalt of the cities.

"Dick, halt!" My sudden request brought a jolting protest from the Ford. "That overburdened mango tree is fairly shouting an invitation!"

The five of us dashed like children to the mango-strewn earth; the tree had benevolently shed its fruits as they had ripened.

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* Sri Yukteswar used to say: "The Lord has given us the fruits of the good earth. We like to see our food, to smell it, to taste it—the Hindu likes also to touch it!" One does not mind *hearing* it, either, if no one else is present at the meal!

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"Full many a mango is born to lie unseen," I paraphrased, "and waste its sweetness on the stony ground."

"Nothing like this in America, Swamiji, eh?" laughed Sailesh Mazumdar, one of my Bengali students.

"No," I admitted, filled with mangoes and contentment. "How I have missed this fruit in the West! A Hindu's heaven without mangoes is inconceivable!"

I hurled a rock and downed a proud beauty from the highest limb.

"Dick," I asked between bites of ambrosia, warm with the tropical sun, "are all the cameras in the car?"

"Yes, sir, in the baggage compartment."

"If Giri Bala proves to be a true saint, I want to write about her in the West. A Hindu yogini with such inspiring powers should not live and die unknown—like most of these mangoes."

Half an hour later I was still strolling in the sylvan peace.

"Sir," Mr. Wright remarked, "we should reach Giri Bala before the sun sets, to have enough light for photographs." He added with a grin, "Westerners are a sceptical lot; we can't expect them to believe in the lady without any pictures!"

This bit of wisdom was indisputable; I turned my back on temptation and reentered the car.

"You are right, Dick," I sighed as we sped along. "I sacrifice the mango paradise on the altar of Western realism. Photographs we must have!"

The road became more and more sickly: wrinkles of ruts, boils of hardened clay—the sad infirmities of old age. Our group dismounted occasionally to allow Mr. Wright more easily to manoeuvre the Ford, which the four of us pushed from behind.

"Lambodar Babu spoke truly," Sailesh acknowledged. "The car is not carrying us; we are carrying the car!"

Our climb-in, climb-out auto tedium was beguiled ever and anon by the appearance of a village, each one a scene of quaint simplicity.

"Our way twisted and turned through groves of palms among ancient, unspoiled villages nestling in the forest shade," Mr. Wright recorded in his travel diary, under date of May 5, 1936. "Very fascinating are these clusters of thatched mud huts, decorated with

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one of the names of God on the door; many small, naked children innocently playing about, pausing to stare or run wildly from this big, black, bullockless carriage tearing madly through their village. The women merely peep from the shadows, while the men lazily loll beneath the trees along the roadside, curious beneath their nonchalance. In one place, all the villagers were gaily bathing in the large tank (in their garments, changing by draping dry cloths around their bodies, dropping the wet ones). Women bearing water to their homes, in huge brass jars.

"The road led us a merry chase over mount and ridge; we bounced and tossed, dipped into small streams, detoured around an unfinished causeway, slithered across dry, sandy riverbeds; and finally, at about five p.m., we were close to our destination, Biur. This small village in the interior of Bankura District, hidden in the protection of dense foliage, is unapproachable by travellers in the rainy season, we were told; then the streams are raging torrents and the roads serpentlike spit mud venom.

"Asking for a guide among a group of worshippers on their way home from a temple prayer (out in the lonely field), we were besieged by a dozen scantily clad lads who clambered on the sides of the car, eager to conduct us to Giri Bala.

"The road led toward a grove of date palms sheltering a group of mud huts, but before we had reached it, the Ford was momentarily tipped at a dangerous angle, tossed up and dropped down. The narrow trail led around trees and tanks, over ridges, into holes and deep ruts. The car became anchored on a clump of bushes, then grounded on a hillock, requiring a lift of earth clods; on we proceeded, slowly and carefully; suddenly the way was stopped by a mass of brush in the middle of the cart track, necessitating a detour down a precipitous ledge into a dry tank, rescue from which demanded some scraping, adzing, and shovelling. Again and again the road seemed impassable, but the pilgrimage must go on; obliging lads fetched spades and demolished the obstacles (blessings of Ganesh!) while hundreds of children and parents stared.

"Soon we were threading our way along the two ruts of antiquity, women gazing wide-eyed from their hut doors, men trailing alongside and behind us, children scampering to swell the procession.

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Ours was perhaps the first auto to traverse these roads; the 'bullock cart union' must be omnipotent here! What a sensation we created — a group piloted by an American and pioneering in a snorting car right into their hamlet fastness, invading the ancient privacy and sanctity!

"Halting by a narrow lane we found ourselves within a hundred feet of Giri Bala's ancestral home. We felt the thrill of fulfillment after the long road struggle crowned by a rough finish. We approached a large, two-storeyed building of brick and plaster, dominating the surrounding adobe huts; the house was under the process of repair, for around it was the characteristically tropical framework of bamboo.

"With feverish anticipation and suppressed rejoicing we stood before the open doors of the one blessed by the Lord's 'hungerless' touch. Constantly agape were the villagers, young and old, bare and dressed, women aloof somewhat but inquisitive too, men and boys unabashedly at our heels as they gazed on this unprecedented spectacle.

"Soon a short figure came into view in the doorway — Giri Bala! She was swathed in a cloth of dull, goldish silk; in typically Indian fashion, she drew forward modestly and hesitatingly, peering at us from beneath the upper fold of her *swadeshi* cloth. Her eyes glistened like smouldering embers from the shadows of her headpiece; we were enamoured by a face of benevolence and Self-realization, free from the taint of earthly attachment.

"Meekly she approached and silently assented to our snapping a number of pictures with our 'still' and 'movie' cameras.* Patiently and shyly she endured our photo techniques of posture adjustment and light arrangement. Finally we had recorded for posterity many photographs of the only woman in the world who is known to have lived without food or drink for over fifty years. (Therese Neumann, of course, has fasted since 1923.) Most motherly was Giri Bala's expression as she stood before us, completely covered in the loose-flowing cloth, nothing of her body visible but her face with its downcast eyes, her hands, and her tiny feet. A face of rare peace and innocent poise — a wide, childlike, quivering lip, a feminine nose, narrow, sparkling eyes, and a wistful smile."

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* Mr. Wright also took moving pictures of Sri Yukteswar during his last Winter Solstice Festival in Serampore.

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Mr. Wright's impression of Giri Bala was shared by me; spirituality enfolded her like her gently shining veil. She *pranamed* before me in the customary gesture of greeting from a householder to a monk. Her simple charm and quiet smile gave us a welcome beyond that of honeyed oratory; forgotten was our difficult, dusty trip.

The little saint seated herself cross-legged on the verandah. Though bearing the scars of age, she was not emaciated; her olive-coloured skin had remained clear and healthy in tone.

"Mother," I said in Bengali, "for over twenty-five years I have thought eagerly of this very pilgrimage! I heard about your sacred life from Sthiti Lal Nundy Babu."

She nodded in acknowledgment. "Yes, my good neighbour in Nawabganj."

"During those years I have crossed the oceans, but never forgot my plan someday to see you. The sublime drama that you are here playing so inconspicuously should be blazoned before a world that has long forgotten the inner food divine."

The saint lifted her eyes for a minute, smiling with serene interest.

"Baba (honoured father) knows best," she answered meekly.

I was happy that she had taken no offence; one never knows how yogis and yoginis will react to the thought of publicity. They shun it, as a rule, wishing to pursue in silence the profound soul research. An inner sanction comes to them when the proper time arrives to display their lives openly for the benefit of seeking minds.

"Mother," I went on, "forgive me, then, for burdening you with many questions. Kindly answer only those that please you; I shall understand your silence, also."

She spread her hands in a gracious gesture. "I am glad to reply, insofar as an insignificant person like myself can give satisfactory answers."

"Oh, no, not insignificant!" I protested sincerely. "You are a great soul."

"I am the humble servant of all." She added quaintly, "I love to cook, and to feed people."

A strange pastime, I thought, for a non-eating saint!

"Tell me, Mother, from your own lips—do you live without food?"

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"That is true." She was silent for a few moments; her next remark showed that she had been struggling with mental arithmetic. "From the age of twelve years four months down to my present age of sixty-eight—a period of over fifty-six years—I have not eaten food or taken liquids."

"Are you never tempted to eat?"

"If I felt a craving for food, I would have to eat." Simply yet regally she stated this axiomatic truth, one known too well by a world revolving around three meals a day!

"But you do eat something!" My tone held a note of remonstrance.

"Of course!" She smiled in swift understanding.

"Your nourishment is derived from the finer energies of the air and sunlight,* and from the cosmic power that recharges your body through the medulla oblongata."

"Baba knows." Again she acquiesced, her manner soothing and unemphatic.

"Mother, please tell me about your early life. It holds a deep interest for all of India, and even for our brothers and sisters beyond the seas."

Giri Bala put aside her habitual reserve, relaxing into a con-

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* "What we eat is radiation; our food is so much quanta of energy," Dr. George. W. Crile of Cleveland told a gathering of medical men on May 17, 1933, in Memphis. Parts of his speech were reported as follows:

"This all-important radiation, which releases electrical currents for the body's electrical circuit, the nervous system, is given to food by the sun's rays. Atoms, Dr. Crile says, are solar systems. Atoms are the vehicles that are filled with solar radiance as so many coiled springs. These countless atomfuls of energy are taken in as food. Once in the human body, these tense vehicles, the atoms, are discharged in the body's protoplasm, the radiance furnishing new chemical energy, new electrical currents. 'Your body is made up of such atoms,' Dr. Crile said. 'They are your muscles, brains, and sensory organs, such as the eyes and ears.' "

Someday scientists will discover how man can live directly on solar energy. "Chlorophyll is the only substance known in nature that somehow possesses the power to act as a 'sunlight trap,'" William L. Laurence writes in *The New York Times*. "It 'catches' the energy of sunlight and stores it in the plant. Without this no life could exist. We obtain the energy we need for living from the solar energy stored in the plant-food we eat or in the flesh of the animals that eat the plants. The energy we obtain from coal or oil is solar energy trapped by the chlorophyll in plant life millions of years ago. We live by the sun through the agency of chlorophyll."

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versational mood.

"So be it." Her voice was low and firm. "I was born in these forest regions. My childhood was unremarkable save that I was possessed by an insatiable appetite.

"I had been betrothed when I was about nine years old.

"'Child,' my mother often warned me, 'try to control your greed. When the time comes for you to live among strangers in your husband's family, what will they think of you if your days are spent in nothing but eating?'

"The calamity she had foreseen came to pass. I was only twelve when I joined my husband's people in Nawabganj. My mother-in-law shamed me morning, noon, and night about my gluttonous habits. Her scoldings were a blessing in disguise, however; they roused my dormant spiritual tendencies. One morning her ridicule was merciless.

"'I shall soon prove to you,' I said, stung to the quick, 'that I shall never touch food again as long as I live.'

"My mother-in-law laughed in derision. 'So!' she said, 'how can you live without eating, when you cannot live without overeating?'

"This remark was unanswerable. Yet an iron resolution had entered my heart. In a secluded spot I sought my Heavenly Father.

"'Lord,' I prayed incessantly, 'please send me a guru, one who can teach me to live by Thy light and not by food.'

"An ecstasy fell over me. In a beatific spell I set out for the Nawabganj *ghat* on the Ganges. On the way I encountered the priest of my husband's family.

"'Venerable sir,' I said trustingly, 'kindly tell me how to live without eating.'

"He stared at me without reply. Finally he spoke in a consoling manner. 'Child,' he said, 'come to the temple this evening; I will conduct a special Vedic ceremony for you.'

"This vague answer was not the one I was seeking; I continued toward the *ghat*. The morning sun pierced the waters; I purified myself in the Ganges, as though for a sacred initiation. As I left the riverbank, my wet cloth around me, in the broad glare of day my master materialized himself before me!

"'Dear little one,' he said in a voice of loving compassion, 'I am the guru sent here by God to fulfill your urgent prayer. He was

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deeply touched by its very unusual nature! From today you shall live by the astral light; your bodily atoms shall be recharged by the infinite current.' "

Giri Bala fell into silence. I took Mr. Wright's pencil and pad and translated into English a few items for his information.

The saint resumed the tale, her gentle voice barely audible. "The *ghat* was deserted, but my guru cast round us an aura of guarding light, that no stray bathers later disturb us. He initiated me into a *kria* technique that frees the body from dependence on the gross food of mortals. The technique includes the use of a certain *mantra** and a breathing exercise more difficult than the average person could perform. No medicine or magic is involved; nothing beyond the *kria*."

In the manner of the American newspaper reporter, who had unknowingly taught me his procedure, I questioned Giri Bala on many matters that I thought would be of interest to the world. She gave me, bit by bit, the following information:

"I have never had any children; many years ago I became a widow. I sleep very little, as sleep and waking are the same to me. I meditate at night, attending to my domestic duties in the daytime. I slightly feel the change in climate from season to season. I have never been sick or experienced any disease. I feel only slight pain when accidentally injured. I have no bodily excretions. I can control my heartbeat and breathing. In visions I often see my guru and other great souls."

"Mother," I asked, "why don't you teach others the method of living without food?"

My ambitious hopes for the world's starving millions were quickly shattered.

"No." She shook her head. "I was strictly commanded by my guru not to divulge the secret. It is not his wish to tamper with God's drama of creation. The farmers would not thank me if I taught many people to live without eating! The luscious fruits

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* Potent vibratory chant. The literal translation of Sanskrit *mantra* is "instrument of thought." It signifies "the ideal, inaudible sounds which represent one aspect of creation; when vocalized as syllables, a *mantra* constitutes a universal terminology" (Webster's New International Dictionary, 2nd ed.). The infinite powers of sound are derived from *Aum*, the "Word" or creative hum of the Cosmic Motor.

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would lie uselessly on the ground. It appears that misery, starvation, and disease are whips of our karma that ultimately drive us to seek the true meaning of life."

"Mother," I said slowly, "what is the use of your having been singled out to live without eating?"

"To prove that man is Spirit." Her face lit with wisdom. "To demonstrate that by divine advancement he can gradually learn to live by the Eternal Light and not by food."*

The saint sank into a deep meditative state. Her gaze was directed inward; the gentle depths of her eyes became expressionless. She gave a certain sigh, the prelude to the ecstatic breathless trance. For a time she had fled to the questionless realm, the heaven of inner joy.

The tropical darkness had fallen. The light of a small kerosene lamp flickered fitfully over the heads of many villagers squatting silently in the shadows. The darting glowworms and distant oil lanterns of the huts wove bright eerie patterns into the velvet night. It was the painful hour of parting; a slow, tedious journey lay before our little party.

"Giri Bala," I said as the saint opened her eyes, "please give me a keepsake—a strip from one of your saris."

She soon returned with a piece of Banaras silk, extending it in her hand as she suddenly prostrated herself on the ground.

"Mother," I said reverently, "rather let me touch your own blessed feet!"

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* The non-eating state attained by Giri Bala is a yogic power mentioned in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* III:31. She employs a certain breathing exercise that affects the *vishuddha chakra*, the fifth centre of subtle energies located in the spine. The *vishuddha chakra*, opposite the throat, controls the fifth element, *akash* or ether, pervasive in the intra-atomic spaces of the physical cells. Concentration on this *chakra* ("wheel") enables the devotee to live by etheric energy.

Therese Neumann neither lives by gross food nor practises a scientific yogic technique for non-eating. The explanation is hidden in the complexities of personal karma. Many lives of dedication to God lie behind a Therese Neumann and a Giri Bala, but their channels for outward expression have been different. Among Christian saints who lived without eating (they were also stigmatists) may be mentioned St. Lidwina of Schiedam, Blessed Elizabeth of Rent, St. Catherine of Siena, Dominica Lazarri, Blessed Angela of Foligno, and the 19th-century Louise Lateau. St. Nicholas of Flüe (Bruder Klaus, the 15th-century hermit whose impassioned plea for union saved the Swiss Confederation) was an abstainer from food for twenty years.

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CHAPTER 47

I Return to the West

"I have given many yoga lessons in India and America; but I must confess that, as a Hindu, I am unusually happy to be conducting a class for English students."

My London class members laughed appreciatively; no political turmoils ever disturbed our yoga peace.

India was now a hallowed memory. It is September 1936; I am in England to fulfill a promise, given sixteen months earlier, to lecture again in London.

England, too, is receptive to the timeless yoga message. Reporters and newsreel cameramen swarmed over my quarters at Grosvenor House. The British National Council of the World Fellowship of Faiths organized a meeting on September 29 at Whitefield Congregational Church, where I addressed the audience on the weighty subject of "How Faith in Fellowship May Save Civilization." The eight o'clock lectures at Caxton Hall attracted such crowds that on two nights the overflow waited in Windsor House auditorium for my second talk at nine-thirty. Yoga classes during the following weeks grew so large that Mr. Wright was obliged to arrange a transfer to another hall.

English tenacity has an admirable expression in a spiritual relationship. The London yoga students loyally organized themselves, after my departure, into a Self-Realization Fellowship centre, holding their meditation meetings weekly throughout the bitter war years.

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Unforgettable weeks in England; days of sight-seeing in London, then over the beautiful countryside. Mr. Wright and I used the trusty Ford to visit the birthplaces and tombs of the great poets and heroes of British history.

Our little party sailed from Southampton for America in late October on the *Bremen*. The sight of the majestic Statue of Liberty in New York harbour brought to our throats joyous emotional gulps.

The Ford, a bit battered from struggles over ancient soils, was still puissant; it now took in its stride the transcontinental trip to California. In late 1936, lo! Mount Washington Centre.

The year-end holidays are celebrated annually at the Los Angeles centre with an eight-hour group meditation on December 24 (Spiritual Christmas),* followed the next day by a banquet (Social Christmas). The festivities this year were augmented by the presence of dear friends and students from distant cities who had arrived to welcome home the three world travellers.

The Christmas Day feast included delicacies brought fifteen thousand miles for this glad occasion: *gucchi* mushrooms from Kashmir, canned *rasagulla* and mango pulp, *papar* biscuits, and an oil of the Indian *keora* flower for flavouring ice cream. The evening found us grouped around a huge sparkling Christmas tree, the nearby fireplace crackling with logs of aromatic cypress.

Gift-time! Presents from the earth's far corners—Palestine, Egypt, India, England, France, Italy. How laboriously had Mr. Wright counted the trunks at each foreign junction, that no pilfering hand receive the treasures intended for loved ones in America! Plaques of the sacred olive tree from the Holy Land, delicate laces

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* Since 1950 this all-day meditation has been held on December 23. Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship members around the world also keep Christmas thus, in their homes and in YSS/SRF temples and centres, setting aside one day during the Christmas season for deep meditation and prayer. Many have testified to the great spiritual help and blessing they have gained through this annual observance begun by Paramahansa Yogananda.

Paramahansaji also established a Prayer Council at the Mt. Washington Centre (the nucleus of YSS/SRF's Worldwide Prayer Circle), which offers prayers daily for all who request help in solving or dissolving their particular problem. *(Publisher's Note)*

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and embroideries from Belgium and Holland, Persian carpets, finely woven Kashmir shawls, everlastingly fragrant sandalwood trays from Mysore, Shiva "bull's eye" stones from Central Provinces, Indian coins of dynasties long fled, bejewelled vases and cups, miniatures, tapestries, temple incense and perfumes, *swadeshi* cotton prints, lacquer work, Mysore ivory carvings, Persian slippers with their inquisitive long toe, quaint old illuminated manuscripts, velvets, brocades, Gandhi caps, potteries, tiles, brasswork, prayer rugs—booty of three continents!

One by one I distributed the gaily wrapped packages from the immense pile under the tree.

"Sister Gyanamata!" I handed a long box to the saintly American lady of sweet visage and deep realization who, during my absence, had been in charge at the Mt. Washington Centre. From the paper tissues she lifted a sari of golden Banaras silk.

"Thank you, sir; it brings before my eyes the pageant of India."

"Mr. Dickinson!" The next parcel contained a gift that I had bought in a Calcutta bazaar. "Mr. Dickinson will like this," I had thought at the time. A beloved disciple, Mr. E. E. Dickinson had been present at every Christmas festivity since the 1925 founding of the Mt. Washington Centre.

At this eleventh annual celebration, he stood before me, untying the ribbons of an oblong package.

"The silver cup!" Struggling with emotion, he stared at the present, a tall drinking cup. He seated himself some distance away, apparently in a daze. I smiled at him affectionately before resuming my role as Santa Claus.

The ejaculatory evening closed with a prayer to the Giver of all gifts; then a group singing of Christmas carols.

Mr. Dickinson and I were chatting together some time later.

"Sir," he said, "please let me thank you now for the silver cup. I could not find any words on Christmas night."

"I brought the gift especially for you."

"For forty-three years I have been waiting for that silver cup! It is a long story, one I have kept hidden within me." Mr. Dickinson looked at me shyly. "The beginning was dramatic: I was drowning. My older brother had playfully pushed me into a fifteen foot pool

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Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda, Boston, 1922

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Administration building at International Headquarters of Self-Realization Fellowship, established by Yoganandaji in 1925, atop Mt. Washington, Los Angeles, California.

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PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA SMRITI MANDIR

The Smriti Mandir, at YSS Math, Ranchi, is situated on the site of the former storeroom where Paramahansaji had his prophetic vision calling him to the West to spread the *Kriya Yoga* teachings worldwide (see page 341). The hand-sculpted white marble mandir was dedicated in 1995, marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of this historic event.

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Administration building of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, Ranchi.

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YOGODA MATH, ON THE GANGES RIVER AT DAKSHINESWAR

Yogoda Satsanga Society of India registered office.

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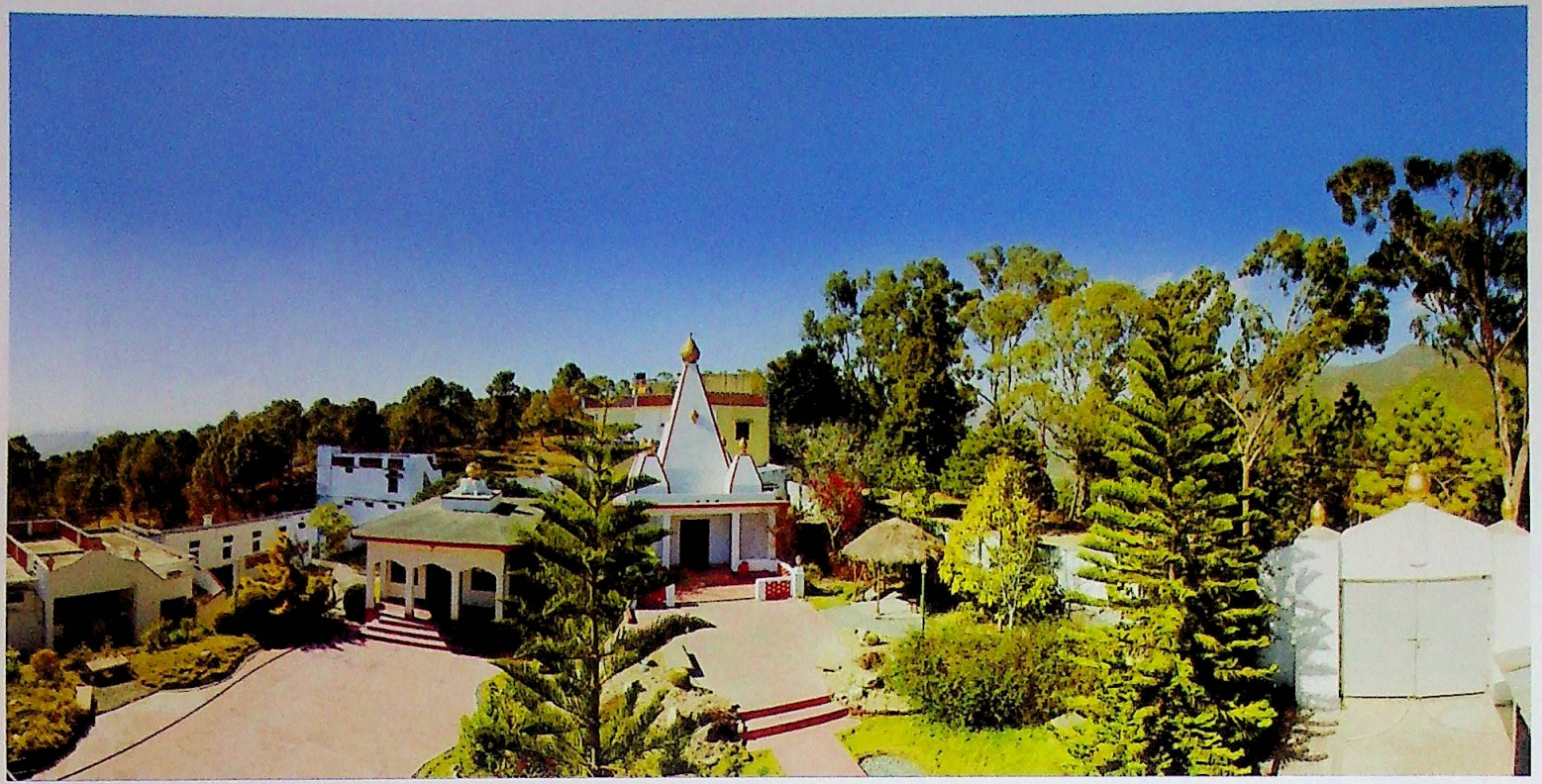

Yogoda Satsanga Society of India Ashram and Retreat in the Himalayan foothills near Dwarahat. In the hills nearby is the cave where Mahavatar Babaji dwelt for a time, and where, in 1861, he gave *Kriya Yoga* initiation to Lahiri Mahasaya, thus reviving the ancient lost spiritual science for the modern world (see chapter 34).

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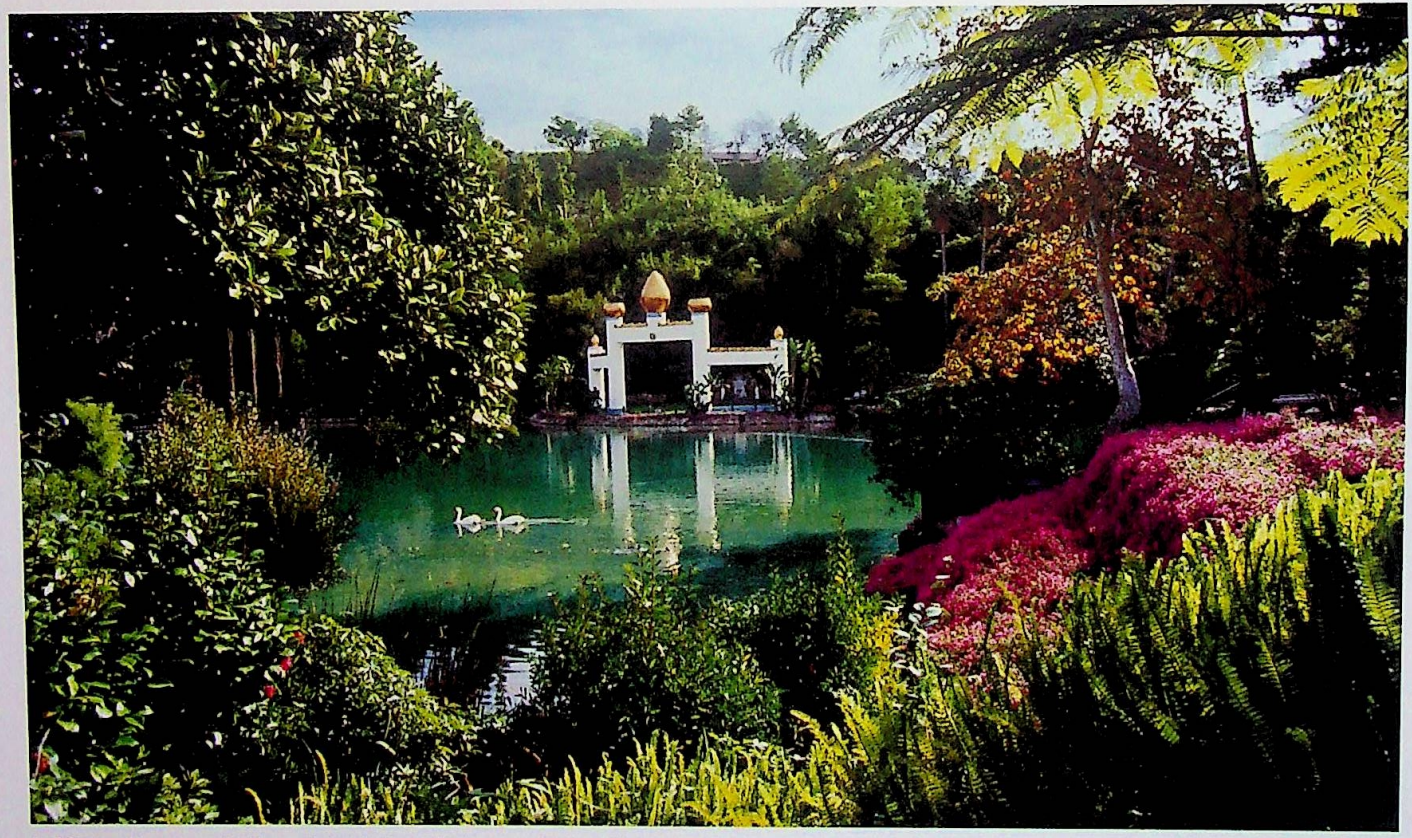

Self-Realization Fellowship Lake Shrine and Gandhi World Peace Memorial, Pacific Palisades, California, dedicated by Paramahansa Yogananda on August 20, 1950

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In 1977, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *mahasamadhi* of Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda, the Government of India issued this commemorative stamp in his honour. With the stamp, the government published a descriptive leaflet, which read, in part:

> "The ideal of love for God and service to humanity found full expression in the life of Paramahansa Yogananda.... Though the major part of his life was spent outside of India, still he takes his place among our great saints. His work continues to grow and shine ever more brightly, drawing people everywhere on the path of the pilgrimage of the Spirit."

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SRI SRI PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA — "THE LAST SMILE"

A photograph taken an hour before his *mahasamadhi*; at a banquet held in honour of Ambassador Binay R. Sen of India, March 7, 1952, in Los Angeles, California.

The photographer has here caught a loving smile that appears to be a farewell benediction for each one of Sri Yogananda ji's millions of friends, students and disciples. The eyes that already were gazing into Eternity are yet full of human warmth and understanding.

Death had no power of disintegration over this incomparable devotee of God; his body manifested a phenomenal state of immutability. (see page 479)

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in a small town in Nebraska. I was only five years old then. As I was about to sink for the second time under the water, a dazzling multicoloured light appeared, filling all space. In the midst was the figure of a man with tranquil eyes and a reassuring smile. My body was sinking for the third time when one of my brother's companions bent a tall slender willow tree in such a low dip that I could grasp it with my desperate fingers. The boys lifted me to the bank and successfully gave me first-aid treatment.

"Twelve years later, a youth of seventeen, I visited Chicago with my mother. It was September 1893; the great World Parliament of Religions was in session. Mother and I were walking down a main street, when again I saw the mighty flash of light. A few paces away, strolling leisurely along, was the same man I had seen years before in vision. He approached a large auditorium and vanished within the door.

"'Mother,' I cried, 'that was the man who appeared at the time I was drowning!'

"She and I hastened into the building; the man was seated on a lecture platform. We soon learned that he was Swami Vivekananda of India.* After he had given a soul-stirring talk, I went forward to meet him. He smiled on me graciously, as though we were old friends. I was so young that I did not know how to give expression to my feelings, but in my heart I was hoping that he would offer to be my teacher. He read my thought.

"'No, my son, I am not your guru.' Vivekananda gazed with his beautiful, piercing eyes deep into my own. 'Your teacher will come later. He will give you a silver cup.' After a little pause, he added, smiling, 'He will pour out to you more blessings than you are now able to hold.'

"I left Chicago in a few days," Mr. Dickinson went on, "and never saw the great Vivekananda again. But every word he had uttered was indelibly written on my inmost consciousness. Years passed; no teacher appeared. One night in 1925 I prayed deeply that the Lord would send me my guru. A few hours later, I was

* Chief disciple of the Christlike master Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

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awakened from sleep by soft strains of melody. A band of celestial beings, carrying flutes and other instruments, came before my view. After filling the air with glorious music, the angels slowly vanished.

"The next evening I attended, for the first time, one of your lectures here in Los Angeles, and knew then that my prayer had been granted."

We smiled at each other in silence.

"For eleven years now I have been your *Kriya Yoga* disciple," Mr. Dickinson continued. "Sometimes I wondered about the silver cup; I had almost persuaded myself that the words of Vivekananda were only metaphorical.

"But on Christmas night, as you handed me the little box by the tree, I saw, for the third time in my life, the same dazzling flash of light. In another minute I was gazing on my guru's gift that Vivekananda had foreseen for me forty-three years earlier* — a silver cup!"

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* Mr. Dickinson met Swami Vivekananda in September of 1893—the year in which Paramahansa Yogananda was born (January 5). Vivekananda was apparently aware that Yogananda was again in incarnation, and that he would go to America to teach the philosophy of India.

In 1965 Mr. Dickinson, still well and active at 89, received the title of Yogacharya (teacher of yoga) in a ceremony at Self-Realization Fellowship headquarters in Los Angeles.

He often meditated for long periods with Paramahansaji, and never missed *Kriya Yoga* practice, three times daily.

Two years before his passing on June 30, 1967, Yogacharya Dickinson gave a talk to the SRF monks. He told them an interesting detail he had forgotten to mention to Paramahansaji. Yogacharya Dickinson said: "When I went up to the lecture platform in Chicago to speak to Swami Vivekananda, before I could greet him he said:

"'Young man, I want you to stay out of the water!'" *(Publisher's Note)*

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At Encinitas in California

"A surprise, sir! During your absence abroad we have had this Encinitas hermitage built; it is a 'welcome-home' gift!" Mr. Lynn, Sister Gyanamata, Durga Ma, and a few other devotees smilingly led me through a gate and up a tree-shaded walk.

I saw a building jutting out like a great white ocean liner toward the blue brine. First speechlessly, then with "Oh's!" and "Ah's!", finally with man's insufficient vocabulary of joy and gratitude, I examined the ashram: sixteen unusually large rooms, each one charmingly appointed.

The stately central hall, with immense ceiling-high windows, looks out on an altar of grass, ocean, and sky: a symphony in emerald, opal, and sapphire. A mantle over the huge fireplace of the hall holds pictures of Christ, Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Sri Yukteswar; bestowing, I feel, their blessings on this tranquil Western ashram.

Directly below the hall, built into the very bluff, two meditation caves confront the infinities of sky and sea. On the grounds are sun-bathing nooks, flagstone paths leading to quiet arbours, rose gardens, a eucalyptus grove, and a fruit orchard.

"May the good and heroic souls of the saints come here (so reads 'A Prayer for a Dwelling,' from the Zend-Avesta, that hangs on one of the hermitage doors) and may they go hand in hand with us, giving the healing virtues of their blessed gifts that are as ample

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as the earth, as high-reaching as the heavens!"

The large estate in Encinitas, California, is a gift to Self-Realization Fellowship from Mr. James J. Lynn, a faithful *Kriya Yogi* since his initiation in January 1932. An American businessman of endless responsibilities (as head of vast oil interests and as president of the world's largest reciprocal fire-insurance exchange), Mr. Lynn nevertheless finds time daily for long and deep *Kriya Yoga* meditation. Leading thus a balanced life, he has attained in *samadhi* the grace of unshakable peace.

During my stay in India and Europe (June 1935 to October 1936), Mr. Lynn* had lovingly plotted with my correspondents in California to prevent any word from reaching me about the construction of the ashram in Encinitas. Astonishment, delight!

During my earlier years in America I had combed the coast of California in quest of a small site for a seaside ashram. Whenever I had found a suitable location some obstacle had invariably arisen to thwart me. Gazing now over the sunny acres in Encinitas, humbly I saw the fulfillment of Sri Yukteswar's long-ago prophecy: "a retreat by the ocean."†

A few months later, Easter of 1937, I conducted on the lawn of the new ashram the first of many Easter sunrise services. Like the Magi of old, several hundred students gazed in devotional awe at the daily miracle: the awakening solar rite in the eastern sky. To the west lay the Pacific Ocean, booming its solemn praise; in the distance a tiny white sailing boat and the lonely flight of a seagull. "Christ, thou art risen!" Not with the vernal sun alone, but in Spirit's eternal dawn.

Many happy months went by. In the Encinitas setting of perfect beauty, I completed a long-projected work, *Cosmic Chants*.‡ I gave

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* After Paramahansaji's passing, Mr. Lynn (Rajarsi Janakananda) served as president of Self-Realization Fellowship and Yogoda Satsanga Society of India. Of his guru Mr. Lynn said: "How heavenly is the company of a saint! Of all the things that have come to me in life, I treasure most the blessings that Paramahansaji has bestowed on me."

Mr. Lynn entered *mahasamadhi* in 1955. *(Publisher's Note)*

† See page 114.

‡ Published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India. Recordings were made of Paramahansa Yoganandaji chanting a number of the songs in *Cosmic Chants*. These are available from Yogoda Satsanga Society of India. *(Publisher's Note)*

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English words and Western musical notation to many Indian songs. Included were Shankara's chant, "No Birth, No Death"; the Sanskrit "Hymn to Brahma"; Tagore's "Who Is in My Temple?"; and a number of my compositions: "I Will Be Thine Always," "In the Land Beyond My Dreams," "I Give You My Soul Call," "Come, Listen to My Soul Song," and "In the Temple of Silence."

In the preface to the songbook I recounted my first outstanding experience with Western reaction to Eastern chants. The occasion had been a public lecture; the time, April 18, 1926; the place, Carnegie Hall in New York.

On April 17 I had confided to an American student, Mr. Alvin Hunsicker, "I am planning to ask the audience to sing an old Hindu chant, 'O God Beautiful.'"*

Mr. Hunsicker had protested that Oriental songs are not easily understood by Americans.

"Music is a universal language," I had replied. "Americans will not fail to feel the soul aspiration in this lofty chant."

The following night the devotional strains of "O God Beautiful" had come for over an hour from three thousand throats. Blasé no longer, dear New Yorkers! your hearts had soared out in a simple paean of rejoicing. Divine healings had taken place that evening among the devotees chanting with love the Lord's blessed name.

In 1941 I paid a visit to the Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) Centre in Boston. The Boston centre leader, Dr. M. W. Lewis, lodged me in an artistically decorated suite. "Sir," Dr. Lewis said,

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* The words of Guru Nanak's song are as follows:

O God beautiful, O God beautiful!
In the forest Thou art green,
In the mountain Thou art high,
In the river Thou art restless,
In the ocean Thou art grave.
To the serviceful Thou art service,
To the lover Thou art love,
To the sorrowful Thou art sympathy,
To the yogi Thou art bliss.
O God beautiful, O God beautiful,
At Thy feet, O I do bow!

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smiling, "during your early years in America you stayed in this city in a single room, without bath. I wanted you to know that Boston boasts some luxurious apartments!"

Happy years in California sped by, filled with activity. A Self-Realization Fellowship Colony* in Encinitas was established in 1937. The numerous activities at the Colony give many-sided training to disciples in accordance with Self-Realization Fellowship ideals. Fruits and vegetables are grown for the use of residents of the Encinitas and Los Angeles centres.

"He hath made of one blood all nations of men."† "World brotherhood" is a large term, but man must enlarge his sympathies, considering himself in the light of a world citizen. He who truly understands that "it is my America, my India, my Philippines, my Europe, my Africa" and so on, will never lack scope for a useful and happy life.

Though the body of Sri Yukteswar never dwelt on any soil except India's, he knew this brotherly truth:

"The world is my homeland."

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* Now a flourishing Ashram Centre, whose buildings include the original main hermitage, ashrams for monks and nuns, dining facilities, and an attractive retreat for members and friends. A series of white pillars facing the highway side of the spacious grounds are crowned with lotuses of gold-leafed metal. In Indian art the lotus is a symbol of the Cosmic Consciousness centre (*sahasrara*) in the brain, the "thousand-petalled lotus of light."

† *Acts* 17:26 (Bible).

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CHAPTER 49

The Years 1940–1951

"We have indeed learned the value of meditation, and know that nothing can disturb our inner peace. In the last few weeks during the meetings we have heard air-raid warnings and listened to the explosion of delayed-action bombs, but our students still gather and thoroughly enjoy our beautiful service."

This brave message, written by the leader of the London Self-Realization Fellowship Centre, was one of many letters sent to me from war-ravaged England and Europe during the years that preceded America's entry into World War II.

Dr. L. Cranmer-Byng of London, noted editor of *The Wisdom of the East Series*, wrote me in 1942 as follows:

"When I read *East-West** I realised how far apart we seemed to be, apparently living in two different worlds. Beauty, order, calm, and peace come to me from Los Angeles, sailing into port as a vessel laden with the blessings and comfort of the Holy Grail to a beleaguered city.

"I see as in a dream your palm-tree grove, and the temple in Encinitas with its ocean stretches and mountain views; and above all its fellowship of spiritually minded men and women — a community

* The magazine is now called *Self-Realization*.

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comprehended in unity, absorbed in creative work, and replenished in contemplation....Greetings to all the Fellowship from a common soldier, written on the watchtower waiting for the dawn."

A Church of All Religions in Hollywood, California, was built by Self-Realization Fellowship workers and dedicated in 1942. A year later another temple was founded in San Diego, California; and, in 1947, one in Long Beach, California.

One of the most beautiful estates in the world, a floral wonderland in the Pacific Palisades section of Los Angeles, was donated in 1949 to Self-Realization Fellowship. The ten-acre site is a natural amphitheatre, surrounded by verdant hills. A large natural lake, a blue jewel in a mountain diadem, has given the estate its name of Lake Shrine. A quaint Dutch-windmill house on the grounds contains a peaceful chapel. Near a sunken garden a large waterwheel splashes a leisurely music. Two marble statues from China adorn the site—a statue of Lord Buddha and one of Kwan Yin (the Chinese personification of the Divine Mother). A life-size statue of Christ, its serene face and flowing robes strikingly illuminated at night, stands on a hill above a waterfall.

A Mahatma Gandhi World Peace Memorial at the Lake Shrine was dedicated in 1950, the year that marked the thirtieth anniversary* of Self-Realization Fellowship in America. A portion of the Mahatma's ashes, sent from India, was enshrined in a thousand-year-old stone sarcophagus.

A Self-Realization Fellowship "India Centre" in Hollywood was founded in 1951. Mr. Goodwin J. Knight, Lieutenant Governor of California, and Mr. M. R. Ahuja, Consul General of India, joined me in the dedicatory services. On the site is India Hall, an auditorium seating 250 persons.

Newcomers to the various centres often want further light on yoga. A question I sometimes hear is this: "Is it true, as certain organizations state, that yoga may not be successfully studied in printed form but should be pursued only with the guidance of a nearby teacher?"

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* In celebrating this anniversary, I conducted a sacred ceremony in Los Angeles on August 27, 1950, at which I gave *Kriya Yoga* initiation to 500 students.

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In the Atomic Age, yoga should be taught by a method of instruction such as the *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons*,* or the liberating science will again be restricted to a chosen few. It would indeed be a priceless boon if each student could keep by his side a guru perfected in divine wisdom; but the world is composed of many "sinners" and few saints. How then may the multitudes be helped by yoga, if not through study in their homes of instructions written by true yogis?

The only alternative is that the "average man" be ignored and left without yoga knowledge. Such is not God's plan for the new age. Babaji has promised to guard and guide all sincere *Kriya Yogis* in their path toward the Goal.† Hundreds of thousands, not dozens merely, of *Kriya Yogis* are needed to bring into manifestation the world of peace and plenty that awaits men when they have made the proper effort to reestablish their status as sons of the Divine Father.

The founding in the West of a Self-Realization Fellowship organization, a "hive for the spiritual honey," was a duty enjoined on me by Sri Yukteswar and Mahavatar Babaji. The fulfilment of the sacred trust has not been devoid of difficulties.

"Tell me truly, Paramahansaji, has it been worth it?" This laconic question was put to me one evening by Dr. Lloyd Kennell, a leader of the temple in San Diego. I understood him to mean: "Have you been happy in America? What about the falsehoods circulated by misguided people who are anxious to prevent the spread of yoga? What about the disillusionments, the heartaches, the centre leaders who could not lead, the students who could not be taught?"

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* This comprehensive home-study series is available from Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, Ranchi, the society established by Paramahansa Yoganandaji for the dissemination of the *Kriya Yoga* science of meditation and spiritual living. (See page 482) *(Publisher's Note)*

† Paramahansa Yogananda, also, told his students of East and West that, after this life, he would continue to watch over the spiritual progress of all *Kriyabans* (students of the *Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons* who have received *Kriya* initiation; see page 313 n.). The truth of his beautiful promise has been proved, since his *mahasamadhi*, by letters from many *Kriya Yogis* who have become aware of his omnipresent guidance. *(Publisher's Note)*

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"Blessed is the man whom the Lord doth test!" I answered. "He has remembered, now and then, to put a burden on me." I thought, then, of all the faithful ones, of the love and devotion and understanding that illumines the heart of America. With slow emphasis I went on: "But my answer is yes, a thousand times yes! It *has* been worthwhile, more than ever I dreamed, to see East and West brought closer in the only lasting bond, the spiritual."

The great masters of India who have shown keen interest in the West have well understood modern conditions. They know that, until there is better assimilation in all nations of the distinctive Eastern and Western virtues, world affairs cannot improve. Each hemisphere needs the best offerings of the other.

In the course of world travel I have sadly observed much suffering:* in the Orient, suffering chiefly on the material plane; in the Occident, misery chiefly on the mental or the spiritual plane. All nations feel the painful effects of unbalanced civilizations. India and many other Eastern lands can greatly benefit from emulation of the practical grasp of affairs, the material efficiency, of Western nations like America. The Occidental peoples, on the other hand, require a deeper understanding of the spiritual basis of life, and particularly of scientific techniques that India anciently developed for man's conscious communion with God.

The ideal of a well-rounded civilization is not a chimerical one. For millenniums India was a land of both spiritual light and widespread material prosperity. The poverty of the last 200 years is, in India's long history, only a passing karmic phase. A byword in the

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*"That voice is round me like a bursting sea:
'And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancied as lost, I have stored for thee at home.
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!' "

—Francis Thompson, "The Hound of Heaven"

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world, century after century, was "the riches of the Indies."* Abundance, material as well as spiritual, is a structural expression of *rita*, cosmic law or natural righteousness. There is no parsimony in the Divine, nor in Its goddess of phenomena, exuberant Nature.

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* The records of history present India, up until the 18th century, as the world's wealthiest nation. Incidentally, nothing in Hindu literature or tradition tends to substantiate the current Western historical theory that the early Aryans "invaded" India from some other part of Asia or from Europe. The scholars are understandably unable to fix the starting point of this imaginary journey. The internal evidence in the Vedas, pointing to India as the immemorial home of the Hindus, has been presented in an unusual and very readable volume, *Rig-Vedic India*, by Abinas Chandra Das, published in 1921 by Calcutta University. Professor Das claims that emigrants from India settled in various parts of Europe and Asia, spreading the Aryan speech and folklore. The Lithuanian tongue, for example, is in many ways strikingly similar to Sanskrit. The philosopher Kant, who knew nothing of Sanskrit, was amazed at the scientific structure of the Lithuanian language. "It possesses," he said, "the key that will open all the enigmas, not only of philology but also of history."

The Bible refers to the riches of India, telling us (*II Chronicles* 9:21,10) that the "ships of Tarshish" brought to King Solomon "gold and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks" and "algum [sandalwood] trees and precious stones" from Ophir (Sopara on the Bombay coast). Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador (4th century B.C.), has left us a detailed picture of India's prosperity. Pliny (1st century A.D.) tells us the Romans annually spent fifty million sesterces ($5,000,000) on imports from India, which was then a vast marine power.

Chinese travellers wrote vividly of the opulent Indian civilization, its widespread education and excellent government. The Chinese priest Fa-Hsien (5th century) tells us the Indian people were happy, honest, and prosperous. See Samuel Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World* (India was the "Western world" to the Chinese!), Trubner, London; and Thomas Watters' *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, A.D. 629–45*, Royal Asiatic Society.

Columbus, discovering the New World in the 15th century, was in reality seeking a shorter trade route to India. For centuries Europe was eager to possess the Indian exports—silks, fine cloths (of such sheerness as to deserve their descriptions: "woven air" and "invisible mist"), cotton prints, brocades, embroideries, rugs, cutlery, armour, ivory and ivory work, perfumes, incense, sandalwood, potteries, medicinal drugs and unguents, indigo, rice, spices, coral, gold, silver, pearls, rubies, emeralds, and diamonds.

Portuguese and Italian merchants have recorded their awe at the fabulous magnificence throughout the empire of Vijayanagar (1336–1565). The glory of its capital was described by the Arabian ambassador Razzak as "such that eye has not seen, nor has ear heard of, any place to equal it on earth."

In the 16th century, for the first time in her long history, India as a whole fell under non-Hindu rule. The Turkish Baber invaded the country in 1524 and founded a dynasty of Moslem kings. By settling in the ancient land, the new monarchs did not drain it of its riches. Weakened, however, by internal dissensions, wealthy India became the prey in the 17th century of several European nations; England finally emerged as

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The Hindu scriptures teach that man is attracted to this particular earth to learn, more completely in each successive life, the infinite ways in which the Spirit may be expressed through, and dominant over, material conditions. East and West are learning this great truth in different ways, and should gladly share with each other their discoveries. Beyond all doubt it is pleasing to the Lord when His earth-children struggle to attain a world civilization free from poverty, disease, and soul ignorance. Man's forgetfulness of his divine resources (the result of his misuse of free will*) is the root cause of all other forms of suffering.

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the ruling power. India peacefully attained her independence on August 15, 1947.

Like so many Indians, I have a now-it-can-be-told story. A group of young men, whom I had known in college, approached me during World War I and urged me to lead a revolutionary movement. I declined with these words: "Killing our English brothers cannot accomplish any good for India. Her freedom will not come through bullets, but through spiritual force." I then warned my friends that the arms-laden German ships, on which they were depending, would be intercepted by the British at Diamond Harbour, Bengal. The young men, however, went ahead with their plans, which proceeded to go awry in the manner I had foreseen. My friends were released from prison after a few years. Abandoning their belief in violence, several of them joined Mahatma Gandhi's ideal political movement. In the end they saw India's victory in a "war" won by peaceful means.

The sad division of the land into India and Pakistan, and the short but bloody interlude that ensued in a few parts of the country, were caused by economic factors, and not essentially by religious fanaticism (a minor reason often erroneously presented as a major one). Countless Hindus and Moslems, now as in the past, have lived side by side in amity. Men of both faiths, in immense numbers, became disciples of the "creedless" master Kabir (1450–1518); and to this day he has millions of followers (*Kabir-panthis*). Under the Moslem rule of Akbar the Great, the widest possible freedom of belief prevailed throughout India. Nor is there today any serious religious disharmony amongst 95% of the simple people. The real India, the India that could understand and follow a Mahatma Gandhi, is found not in the large restless cities but in the peaceful 700,000 villages, where simple and just forms of self-government by *panchayats* (local councils) have been a feature from time immemorial. The problems that beset a newly freed India today will surely be solved in time by those great men whom India has never failed to produce.

* "Freely we serve,
Because we freely love, as in our will
To love or not; in this we stand or fall.
And some are fallen, to disobedience fallen,
And so from heaven to deepest hell. O fall
From what high state of bliss into what woe!"
—*Milton, "Paradise Lost"*

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The ills attributed to an anthropomorphic abstraction called "society" may be laid more realistically at the door of Everyman.* Utopia must spring in the private bosom before it can flower in civic virtue, inner reforms leading naturally to outer ones. A man who has reformed himself will reform thousands.

The time-tested scriptures of the world are one in essence, inspiring man on his upward journey. One of the happiest periods of my life was spent in dictating, for *Self-Realization Magazine*, my interpretation of part of the New Testament. Fervently I implored Christ to guide me in divining the true meaning of his words, many of which have been grievously misunderstood for twenty centuries.

One night while I was engaged in silent prayer, my sitting room in the Encinitas hermitage became filled with an opal-blue light. I beheld the radiant form of the blessed Lord Jesus. A young man, he seemed, of about twenty-five, with a sparse beard and moustache; his long black hair, parted in the middle, was haloed by a shimmering gold.

His eyes were eternally wondrous; as I gazed, they were infinitely changing. With each divine transition in their expression, I intuitively understood the wisdom conveyed. In his glorious gaze I felt the power that upholds the myriad worlds. A Holy Grail appeared at his mouth; it came down to my lips and then returned to Jesus. After a few moments he uttered beautiful words, so personal in their nature that I keep them in my heart.

I spent much time in 1950 and 1951 at a tranquil retreat near the Mojave Desert in California. There I translated the Bhagavad Gita and wrote a detailed commentary† that presents the various paths of yoga.

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* The plan of the divine *lila* or "sportive play" by which the phenomenal worlds have come into existence is one of *reciprocity* between creature and Creator. The sole gift that man can offer to God is love; it suffices to call forth His overwhelming generosity. "Ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."—*Malachi* 3:9–10 (Bible).

† *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita—Royal Science of God-Realization*, published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India. The Bhagavad Gita is India's most beloved

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Twice* referring explicitly to a yogic technique (the only one mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita and the same one that Babaji named, simply, *Kriya Yoga*), India's greatest scripture has thus offered practical as well as moral teaching. In the ocean of our dream-world, the breath is the specific storm of delusion that produces the consciousness of individual waves — the forms of men and of all other material objects. Knowing that mere philosophical and ethical knowledge is insufficient to rouse man from his painful dream of separate existence, Lord Krishna pointed out the holy science by which the yogi may master his body and convert it, at will, into pure energy. The possibility of this yogic feat is not beyond the theoretical comprehension of modern scientists, pioneers in an Atomic Age. All matter has been proved to be reducible to energy.

The Hindu scriptures extol the yogic science because it is employable by mankind in general. The mystery of breath, it is true, has occasionally been solved without the use of formal yoga techniques, as in the cases of non-Hindu mystics who possessed transcendent powers of devotion to the Lord. Such Christian, Moslem, and other saints have indeed been observed in the breathless and motionless trance (*ʂabikalpa ʂamaḍhi*†), without which no man has entered the first stages of God-perception. (After a saint has reached *nirbikalpa* or the highest *ʂamaḍhi*, however, he is irrevocably established in the Lord—whether he be breathless or breathing, motionless or active.)

Brother Lawrence, the 17th-century Christian mystic, tells us his first glimpse of God-realization came about by viewing a tree. Nearly all human beings have seen a tree; few, alas, have thereby

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scripture. It consists of a dialogue between Lord Krishna (symbolizing Spirit) and his disciple Arjuna (symbolizing the soul of the ideal devotee): words of spiritual guidance that are timeless in their applicability by all truth-seekers. The central message of the Gita is that man may win emancipation through love for God, wisdom, and performance of right actions in a spirit of nonattachment.

* Bhagavad Gita IV:29 and V:27–28.

† See chapter 26. Among Christian mystics who have been observed in *ʂabikalpa ʂamaḍhi* may be mentioned St. Teresa of Avila, whose body would become so immovably fixed that the astonished nuns in the convent were unable to alter her position or to rouse her to outward consciousness.

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seen the tree's Creator. Most men are utterly incapable of summoning those irresistible powers of devotion that are effortlessly possessed only by a few *ekantins*, "singlehearted" saints found in all religious paths, whether of East or West. Yet the ordinary man* is not therefore shut out from the possibility of divine communion. He needs, for soul recollection, no more than the *Kriya Yoga* technique, a daily observance of the moral precepts, and an ability to cry sincerely: "Lord, I yearn to know Thee!"

The universal appeal of yoga is thus its approach to God through a daily usable scientific method, rather than through a devotional fervour that, for the average man, is beyond his emotional scope.

Various great Jain teachers of India have been called *tirthakaras*, "ford-makers," because they reveal the passage by which bewildered humanity may cross over and beyond the stormy seas of *samsara* (the karmic wheel, the recurrence of lives and deaths). *Samsara* (literally, "a flowing with" the phenomenal flux) induces man to take the line of least resistance. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."† To become the friend of God, man must overcome the devils or evils of his own karma or actions that ever urge him to spineless acquiescence in the mayic delusions of the world. A knowledge of the iron law of karma encourages the earnest seeker to find the way of final escape from its bonds. Because the karmic slavery of human beings is rooted in the desires of *maya*-darkened minds, it is with mind-control‡ that

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* The "ordinary man" must make a spiritual start somewhere, sometime. "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step," Lao-tzu observed. Cf. Lord Buddha: "Let no man think lightly of good, saying in his heart, 'It will not come nigh me.' By the falling of waterdrops a pot is filled; the wise man becomes full of good, even if he gather it little by little."

† *James* 4:4 (Bible).

‡ "Steadfast a lamp burns sheltered from the wind;
Such is the likeness of the Yogi's mind
Shut from sense-storms and burning bright to Heaven.
When mind broods placid, soothed with holy wont;
When Self contemplates self, and in itself
Hath comfort; when it knows the nameless joy
Beyond all scope of sense, revealed to soul —
Only to soul! and, knowing, wavers not,

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the yogi concerns himself. The various cloaks of karmic ignorance are laid away, and man views himself in his native essence.

The mystery of life and death, whose solution is the only purpose of man's sojourn on earth, is intimately interwoven with breath. Breathlessness is deathlessness. Realizing this truth, the ancient rishis of India seized on the sole clue of the breath and developed a precise and rational science of breathlessness.

Had India no other gift for the world, *Kriya Yoga* alone would suffice as a kingly offering.

The Bible contains passages which reveal that the Hebrew prophets were well aware that God has made the breath to serve as the subtle link between body and soul. Genesis states: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."* The human body is composed of chemical and metallic substances that are also found in the "dust of the ground." The flesh of man could never carry on activity nor manifest energy and motion were it not for the life currents transmitted by soul to body through the instrumentality, in unenlightened men, of the breath (gaseous energy). The life currents, operating in the human body as the fivefold *prana* or subtle life energies, are an expression of the *Aum* vibration of the omnipresent soul.

The reflection, the verisimilitude, of life that shines in the fleshly cells from the soul source is the only cause of man's attachment to his body; obviously he would not pay solicitous homage to a clod of clay. A human being falsely identifies himself with his physical form because the life currents from the soul are breath-conveyed into the flesh with such intense power that man mistakes the effect for a cause, and idolatrously imagines the body to have life of its own.

True to the farther Truth; when, holding this,
It deems no other treasure comparable,
But, harboured there, cannot be stirred or shook
By any gravest grief, call that state 'peace,'
That happy severance Yoga; call that man
The perfect Yogin!"

— Bhagavad Gita VI:19–23 (*Arnold's translation*)

* *Genesis* 2:7 (Bible).

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Man's conscious state is an awareness of body and breath. His subconscious state, active in sleep, is associated with his mental, and temporary, separation from body and breath. His superconscious state is a freedom from the delusion that "existence" depends on body and breath.* God lives without breath; the soul made in His image becomes conscious of itself, for the first time, only during the breathless state.

When the breath-link between soul and body is severed by evolutionary karma, the abrupt transition called "death" ensues; the physical cells revert to their natural powerlessness. For the *Kriya Yogi*, however, the breath-link is severed at will by scientific wisdom, not by the rude intrusion of karmic necessity. Through actual experience, the yogi is already aware of his essential incorporeity, and does not require the somewhat pointed hint given by Death that man is badly advised to place his reliance on a physical body.

Life by life, each man progresses (at his own pace, be it ever so erratic) toward the goal of his own apotheosis. Death, no interruption in this onward sweep, simply offers man the more congenial environment of an astral world in which to purify his dross. "Let not your heart be troubled.... In my Father's house are many mansions."† It is indeed unlikely that God has exhausted His ingenuity in organizing this world, or that, in the next world, He will offer nothing more challenging to our interest than the strumming of harps.

Death is not a blotting-out of existence, a final escape from life; nor is death the door to immortality. He who has fled his Self in earthly joys will not recapture It amid the gossamer charms of an astral world. There he merely accumulates finer perceptions and

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* "You never will enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars, and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because men are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you; till you can sing and delight and rejoice in God, as misers do in gold, and kings in sceptres...till you are as familiar with the ways of God in all ages as with your walk and table; till you are intimately acquainted with that shady nothing out of which the world was made."

— *Thomas Traherne, "Centuries of Meditations."*

† *John* 14:1–2 (Bible).

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more sensitive responses to the beautiful and the good, which are one. It is on the anvil of this gross earth that struggling man must hammer out the imperishable gold of spiritual identity. Bearing in his hand the hard-won golden treasure, as the sole acceptable gift to greedy Death, a human being wins final freedom from the rounds of physical reincarnation.

For several years I conducted classes in Encinitas and Los Angeles on the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali and other profound works of Hindu philosophy.

"Why did God ever join soul and body?" a class student asked one evening. "What was His purpose in setting into initial motion this evolutionary drama of creation?" Countless other men have posed such questions; philosophers have sought, in vain, fully to answer them.

"Leave a few mysteries to explore in Eternity," Sri Yukteswar used to say with a smile. "How could man's limited reasoning powers comprehend the inconceivable motives of the Uncreated Absolute?* The rational faculty in man, tethered by the cause-effect principle of the phenomenal world, is baffled before the enigma of God, the Beginningless, the Uncaused. Nevertheless, though man's reason cannot fathom the riddles of creation, every mystery will ultimately be solved for the devotee by God Himself."

He who sincerely yearns for wisdom is content to start his search by humbly mastering a few simple ABC's of the divine schema, not demanding prematurely a precise mathematical graph

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* "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." — *Isaiah* 55:8–9 (Bible). Dante testified in *The Divine Comedy:*

> I have been in that heaven the most illumined
> By light from Him, and seen things which to utter
> He who returns hath neither skill nor knowledge;
> For as it nears the object of its yearning
> Our intellect is overwhelmed so deeply
> It never can retrace the path it followed.
> But whatsoever of the holy kingdom
> Was in the power of memory to treasure
> Will be my theme until the song is ended.

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of life's "Einstein Theory."

"*No man hath seen God at any time* (no mortal under 'time,' the relativities of *maya*,* can realise the Infinite); *the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father* (the reflected Christ Consciousness or outwardly projected Perfect Intelligence that, guiding all structural phenomena through *Aum* vibration, has issued forth from the 'bosom' or deeps of the Uncreated Divine in order to express the variety of Unity), *he hath declared* (subjected to form, or manifested) *him*."†

"Verily, verily, I say unto you," Jesus explained, "the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."‡

The threefold nature of God as He demonstrates Himself in the phenomenal worlds is symbolized in Hindu scriptures as Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer-Renovator. Their triune activities are ceaselessly displayed throughout vibratory creation. As the Absolute is beyond the conceptual powers of man, the devout Hindu worships It in the august embodiments of the Trinity.§

The universal creative-preservative-destructive aspect of God, however, is not His ultimate or even His essential nature (for cosmic creation is only His *lila*, creative sport).** His intrinsicality cannot be grasped even by grasping all the mysteries of the Trinity,

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* The earth's diurnal cycle, from light to darkness and vice versa, is a constant reminder to man of creation's involvement in *maya* or oppositional states. (The transitional or equilibrated periods of the day, dawn and dusk, are therefore considered auspicious for meditation.) Rending the dual-textured veil of *maya*, the yogi perceives the transcendent Unity.

† *John* 1:18 (Bible).

‡ *John* 5:19 (Bible).

§ A different conception from that of the trinitarian Reality: *Sat, Tat, Aum*; or Father, Son, Holy Ghost. Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva represents the triune expression of God in the aspect of *Tat* or Son, the Christ Consciousness immanent in vibratory creation. The *shaktis*, energies or "consorts" of the Trinity, are symbols of *Aum* or the Holy Ghost, the sole causative force that upholds the cosmos through vibration. (See pp. 144 n., 194 n.)

** "O Lord...thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." — *Revelation* 4:11 (Bible).

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because His outer nature, as manifested in the lawful atomic flux, merely expresses Him without revealing Him. The final nature of the Lord is known only when "the Son ascends to the Father."* The liberated man overpasses the vibratory realms and enters the Vibrationless Original.

All great prophets have remained silent when requested to unveil the ultimate secrets. When Pilate asked: "What is truth?"† Christ made no reply. The large ostentatious questions of intellectualists like Pilate seldom proceed from a burning spirit of inquiry. Such men speak rather with the empty arrogance that considers a lack of conviction about spiritual values‡ to be a sign of "open-mindedness."

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice."§ In these few words Christ spoke volumes. A child of God "bears witness" *by his life*. He embodies truth; if he expound it also, that is generous redundancy.

Truth is no theory, no speculative system of philosophy, no intellectual insight. Truth is exact correspondence with reality. For man, truth is unshakable knowledge of his real nature, his Self as soul. Jesus, by every act and word of his life, proved that he knew *the truth* of his being—his source in God. Wholly identified with the omnipresent Christ Consciousness, he could say with simple finality: "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Buddha, too, refused to shed light on the metaphysical ultimates, dryly pointing out that man's few moments on earth are best employed in perfecting the moral nature. The Chinese mystic Lao-tzu rightly taught: "He who knows, tells it not; he who tells, knows it not." The final mysteries of God are not "open to discus-

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* *John* 14:12 (Bible).

† *John* 18:38 (Bible).

‡ "Love Virtue; she alone is free;
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her."
—*Milton, "Comus"*

§ *John* 18:37 (Bible).

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sion." The decipherment of His secret code is an art that man cannot communicate to man; here the Lord alone is the Teacher.

"Be still, and know that I am God."* Never flaunting His omnipresence, the Lord is heard only in the immaculate silences. Reverberating throughout the universe as the creative *Aum* vibration, the Primal Sound instantly translates Itself into intelligible words for the devotee in attunement.

The divine purpose of creation, so far as man's reason can grasp it, is expounded in the Vedas. The rishis taught that each human being has been created by God as a soul that will uniquely manifest some special attribute of the Infinite before resuming its Absolute Identity. All men, endowed thus with a facet of Divine Individuality, are equally dear to God.

The wisdom garnered by India, the eldest brother among the nations, is a heritage of all mankind. Vedic truth, as all truth, belongs to the Lord and not to India. The rishis, whose minds were pure receptacles to receive the divine profundities of the Vedas, were members of the human race, born on this earth, rather than on some other, to serve humanity as a whole. Distinctions by race or nation are meaningless in the realm of truth, where the only qualification is spiritual fitness to receive.

God is Love; His plan for creation can be rooted only in love. Does not that simple thought, rather than erudite reasonings, offer solace to the human heart? Every saint who has penetrated to the core of Reality has testified that a divine universal plan exists and that it is beautiful and full of joy.

To the prophet Isaiah, God revealed His intentions in these words:

> So shall my word [creative *Aum*] be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands (*Isaiah* 55:11–12, Bible).

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* *Psalms* 46:10 (Bible). The goal of the science of yoga is to obtain that necessary inner stillness by which one may truly "know God."

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"Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace." The men of a hard-pressed twentieth century hear longingly that wondrous promise. The full truth within it is realisable by every devotee of God who strives manfully to repossess his divine heritage.

The blessed role of *Kriya Yoga* in East and West has hardly more than just begun. May all men come to know that there exists a definite, scientific technique of Self-realization for the overcoming of all human misery!

In sending loving thought vibrations to the thousands of *Kriya Yogis* scattered like shining jewels over the earth, I often think gratefully:

"Lord, Thou hast given this monk a large family!"

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PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA: A YOGI IN LIFE AND DEATH

Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda entered *mahasamadhi* (a yogi's final conscious exit from the body) in Los Angeles, California, on March 7, 1952, after concluding his speech at a banquet held in honour of H.E. Binay R. Sen, Ambassador of India.

The great world teacher demonstrated the value of yoga (scientific techniques for God-realization) not only in life but in death. Weeks after his departure his unchanged face shone with the divine lustre of incorruptibility.

Mr. Harry T. Rowe, Los Angeles Mortuary Director, Forest Lawn Memorial-Park (in which the body of the great master is temporarily placed), sent Self-Realization Fellowship a notarized letter from which the following extracts are taken:

"The absence of any visual signs of decay in the dead body of Paramahansa Yogananda offers the most extraordinary case in our experience....No physical disintegration was visible in his body even twenty days after death....No indication of mould was visible on his skin, and no visible desiccation (drying up) took place in the bodily tissues. This state of perfect preservation of a body is, so far as we know from mortuary annals, an unparalleled one....At the time of receiving Yogananda's body, the Mortuary personnel expected to observe, through the glass lid of the casket, the usual progressive signs of bodily decay. Our astonishment increased as day followed day without bringing any visible change in the body under observation. Yogananda's body was apparently in a phenomenal state of immutability....

"No odour of decay emanated from his body at any time.... The physical appearance of Yogananda on March 27th, just before the bronze cover of the casket was put into position, was the same as it had been on March 7th. He looked on March 27th as fresh and as unravaged by decay as he had looked on the night of his death. On March 27th there was no reason to say that his body had suffered any visible physical disintegration at all. For these reasons we state again that the case of Paramahansa Yogananda is unique in our experience."

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The Line of Gurus

Mahavatar Babaji
Yogavatar Lahiri Mahasaya
Jnanavatar Swami Sri Yukteswar
Premavatar Paramahansa Yogananda

Mahavatar Babaji is the Supreme Guru in the Indian line of masters who assume responsibility for the spiritual welfare of all members of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship who faithfully practice *Kriya Yoga*. "I shall remain incarnate on the earth," he has promised, "until this particular world cycle is ended." (See chapter 33 and 37.)

In 1920 Mahavatar Babaji told Paramahansa Yogananda: "You are the one I have chosen to spread the message of *Kriya Yoga* in the West....The scientific technique of God-realization will ultimately spread in all lands, and aid in harmonizing the nations through man's personal, transcendental perception of the Infinite Father."

Mahavatar means "Great Incarnation" or "Divine Incarnation"; *Yogavatar* means "Incarnation of Yoga"; *Jnanavatar* means "Incarnation of Wisdom."

Premavatar means "Incarnation of Love"– a title bestowed in 1953 on Paramahansa Yogananda by his great disciple, Rajarsi Janakananda (James J. Lynn). (See p. 329n.)

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AIMS AND IDEALS

of

Yogoda Satsanga Society of India

As set forth by

Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda, Gurudeva and Founder

Sri Sri Daya Mata, Sanghamata and President

To disseminate among the nations a knowledge of definite scientific techniques for attaining direct personal experience of God.

To teach that the purpose of life is the evolution, through self-effort, of man's limited mortal consciousness into God Consciousness; and to this end to establish Yogoda Satsanga temples for God-communion, and to encourage the establishment of individual temples of God in the homes and in the hearts of men.

To reveal the complete harmony and basic oneness of original Yoga as taught by Bhagavan Krishna and original Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ; and to show that these principles of truth are the common scientific foundation of all true religions.

To point out the one divine highway to which all paths of true religious beliefs eventually lead: the highway of daily, scientific, devotional meditation on God.

To liberate man from his threefold suffering: physical disease, mental inharmonies, and spiritual ignorance.

To encourage "plain living and high thinking"; and to spread a spirit of brotherhood among all peoples by teaching the eternal basis of their unity: kinship with God.

To demonstrate the superiority of mind over body, of soul over mind.

To overcome evil by good, sorrow by joy, cruelty by kindness, ignorance by wisdom.

To unite science and religion through realization of the unity of their underlying principles.

To advocate cultural and spiritual understanding between East and West, and the exchange of their finest distinctive features.

To serve mankind as one's larger Self.

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Other Books by Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda

Available at your local bookstores or from:
Yogoda Satsanga Society of India
Paramahansa Yogananda Path
Ranchi 834001, Jharkhand

God Talks With Arjuna: *The Bhagavad Gita – A New Translation and Commentary*

In this monumental two-volume work, Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda reveals the innermost essence of India's most renowned scripture. Exploring its psychological, spiritual, and metaphysical depths, he presents a sweeping chronicle of the soul's journey to enlightenment through the royal science of God-realization.

Man's Eternal Quest

Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda's *Collected Talks and Essays* present in-depth discussions of the vast range of inspiring and universal truths that have captivated millions in his *Autobiography of a Yogi.* Volume I explores little-known and seldom-understood aspects of meditation, life after death, the nature of creation, health and healing, the unlimited powers of the mind, and the eternal quest that finds fulfilment only in God.

The Divine Romance

Volume II of Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda's collected talks and essays. Among the wide-ranging selections: *How to Cultivate Divine Love; Harmonizing Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Methods of Healing; A World Without Boundaries; Controlling Your Destiny; The Yoga Art of Overcoming Mortal Consciousness and Death; The Cosmic Lover; Finding the Joy in Life.*

Journey to Self-realization

Volume III of the collected talks and essays presents Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda's unique combination of wisdom, compassion, down-to-earth guidance, and encouragement on dozens of fascinating subjects, including: *Quickening Human Evolution, How to Express Everlasting Youthfulness, and Realizing God in Your Daily Life.*

Wine of the Mystic: *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam — A Spiritual Interpretation*

An inspired commentary that brings to light the mystical science of God-communion hidden behind the *Rubaiyat's* enigmatic imagery. Includes 6 original colour illustrations. The American edition of the book containing 50 original colour illustrations won the 1995 Benjamin Franklin Award for best book in the field of religion.

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Where There Is Light: *Insight and Inspiration for Meeting Life's Challenges*

A practical handbook that gives readers a reassuring sense of direction in times of uncertainty of crisis, as well as positive guidance in meeting the challenges of everyday life. Topics include: *Strength in Times of Adversity; Creating Harmony in Marriage and Friendship; Antidotes for Stress, Worry, and Fear; Understanding Death; Cultivating Inner Peace.*

Whispers from Eternity

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